

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and ninety-third plenary meeting

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President: Mr. Frank Tressler Zamorano (Chile)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call to order the 1593rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, before we proceed to our order of business for today, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to a new colleague who has assumed his responsibilities as representative of his Government to the Conference. We welcome Ambassador Thomas Göbel, Permanent Representative of Germany.

Mr. Göbel (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. First, thank you, too, for the warm welcome you just gave me and for introducing me right away to the Conference on Disarmament. I am very honoured and glad to take the floor in this forum for the first time.

I just handed over my credentials to Ambassador Tressler Zamorano and later this morning I will also meet the Secretary-General of the Conference, but I was impatient to meet with all of you, colleagues, and to get familiar with the place where numerous important conventions were discussed and decided; however, I understand that we are not in that historic room because there is a lot of construction work going on. I think we are all hoping that we will see our customary place in use again.

So, I am looking forward to working with you to follow up on all the great achievements of the past and in the years to come. My Minister addressed this Conference in February 2011 and called this year a watershed for arms control. This, at the time, was against the backdrop of the extension of the New START. And the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its sanitary restrictions and the postponement of several important conferences – the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to name just one – certainly made things more complicated and perhaps also less visible. But I am convinced that this new perspective is still a reality that Germany stands ready to take full advantage of when it comes to discussing the various issues on the agenda.

I do not want to take too much of your precious time for today and will leave it at that. I know that you have to discuss and to finalize the very important report of the Conference – let me just repeat that I am looking forward to working closely with all of you here in Geneva, and I count on your support and also your indulgence as I take my first steps in this forum. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. On behalf of my Government and the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to reiterate our full cooperation and support for you in your new role.

Distinguished delegates, you will recall that we have some speakers remaining from the thematic debate organized by my delegation on women and international security. I intend to give the floor to these speakers before continuing the discussion on the revised draft annual report. The first delegation I have on my list is the delegation from Ukraine. Ambassador Filipenko, you have the floor.

Ms. Filipenko (Ukraine): Good morning, colleagues. Mr. President, I would like to express gratitude to the Chilean presidency for organizing the thematic discussion with a focus on women's participation and role in international security.

I would also like to thank the panellists for giving insight into the respective topic. Last year, we marked the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Ukraine is proud to have been among the authors of this resolution as a non-permanent member of the Security Council at that time, which established the basis for the women and peace and security agenda and called for the special protection and full and equal participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. My country made its contribution to promoting the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and placed this important cross-cutting issue high on the international agenda.

Due to the ongoing external aggression against Ukraine, the issues covered by the resolution are of particular importance for my country. Ukraine knows first-hand what a disproportionate impact armed conflicts can have on women, and the Government of Ukraine is taking a number of targeted steps to address the current challenges.

In this vein, we believe that the national action plans serve as an important tool for governments, organizations and civil society, to support the translation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) into practical action, and to strengthen women's role in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and security processes.

With the adoption of the national action plan for implementation of the resolution, gender equality became part of the reform of the security and defence sector in Ukraine and has been integrated into State policy priorities. In addition, the new State Social Programme for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men is aimed at strengthening institutional mechanisms for ensuring gender equality in a comprehensive manner. Active integration of gender equality in the activities of the armed forces of Ukraine fostered changes to the list of military specialties and positions open to women candidates.

Compared to 2014, when the number of women service members slightly exceeded 14,000, today the total number of women has more than doubled. As of 21 January 2021, almost 32,000 women were serving in the Ukrainian army, 15.6 per cent of the total number of military personnel. There were 4,810 officers, more than 26,000 privates and sergeants, as well as more than 1,000 cadets. In July 2021, for the first time, a woman was appointed commander of the medical forces of Ukraine. Unfortunately, one of the reasons why so many women wear uniforms in Ukraine is the ongoing external aggression against my country.

By joining the armed forces, Ukrainian women have demonstrated to the world that they are capable of defending the State on an equal footing with men. Since the very first day of the Russian aggression, significant volunteer movement has mobilized to support Ukraine's military, and women were at the forefront. They are active on the front lines, providing medical logistical support; they prepare, collect and distribute food, clothing, sleeping bags and military supplies on the front and provide humanitarian assistance to displaced people.

Distinguished colleagues, let me conclude by reiterating Ukraine's commitment to the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and relevant international commitments in order to contribute to the empowerment of women, promote the importance of women's participation and leadership in all aspects of peace and security, as well as post-conflict recovery and reconstruction.

With reference to the recent discussions that we had in the Conference on Disarmament on changes to the Conference's rules of procedure, my delegation supports the efforts to integrate a gender perspective into all areas of work in the Conference of Disarmament. I thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation would like to commend the Chilean presidency for organizing this thematic session on women's participation and their role in international security. We are pleased to share some national perspectives on gender and international security and disarmament affairs and would like to take this opportunity to showcase some examples of our efforts to realize our commitments.

I will focus on three areas of work, starting with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Last year, we commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the unanimous adoption of the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. That resolution and the subsequent resolutions call on the United Nations and its Member States to take a number of interrelated measures to strengthen the role of women during and after armed conflicts – unfortunately, progress is lagging. The gap between the commitments made to the women and peace and security agenda and the implementation of these commitments remains enormous.

The Netherlands is committed to fully implementing all aspects of the women and peace and security agenda. To this end, the Government of the Netherlands, together with civil society organizations, presented the fourth national action plan in December 2020. This action plan has not only an international but also a national policy focus, including an integrated gender policy. As part of this plan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has developed

an implementation plan which translates the strategic goals and the subgoals into diplomatic and programmatic results areas.

It also contains a monitoring and evaluation framework with indicators to track progress and enhance accountability. In the area of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, the Netherlands takes the following actions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and to create an equal, diverse and inclusive environment. First, under the leadership of the Disarmament Impact Group, the Netherlands has worked together with partners to draw attention to the importance of gender in various disarmament forums. The focus is mainly on conventional weapons, such as landmines or cluster munitions, the arms trade and small arms and light weapons, areas where a gender lens is supported by research and has clear added value for effective policy. Regarding weapons of mass destruction, more research is needed to fully understand the differentiated impact of these weapons on equalities between men, women, young women, people with non-binary gender identities, boys and girls.

The Netherlands advocates for gender equality, diversity and women's empowerment in side events and panel discussions. We support resolutions that strive for gender equality, inclusivity and diversity and we work closely with international parties to promote families, policies. We strive to incorporate a gender lens in resolutions that are not specifically focusing on gender equality.

Second, the Generation Equality Forums. At the end of June, the second Generation Equality Forum took place in Paris, following the launch of the first Forum in Mexico City in March 2021. Generation Equality Forum is a global movement to accelerate gender equality convened by UN-Women and co-hosted by the Governments of Mexico and France. The Netherlands was a proud co-leader of the so-called Action Coalition 6, on feminist movements and leadership.

The Generation Equality Forum also launched a compact on women, peace and security and humanitarian action, which was also signed by the Netherlands. This compact is an intergenerational and inclusive global movement which calls for the redesign of peace and security and humanitarian processes to systematically and meaningfully include women, young women and girls, including peacebuilders, refugees and forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls, in the decisions that affect their lives.

Third, the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. My delegation would like to refer to the special session of the Human Rights Council on Afghanistan on 24 August 2021 and a joint statement on the human rights of Afghan women and girls, which the Netherlands, along with other member States, has supported. This joint statement on Afghanistan strongly condemned all forms of violence against women and girls. It called on those in power and with authority to guarantee the rights of women and girls to education, work, health and freedom of movement, to achieve inclusive and sustainable peace in Afghanistan. Like every woman and girl, Afghan women and girls deserve to live in safety, security and dignity.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate its wholehearted commitment to advancing gender equality, women's empowerment, diversity and inclusion in international peace and security, arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament affairs. The Netherlands stands ready to work with Member States, United Nations agencies and other international organizations, civil society organizations and partners to achieve tangible results in line with our joint commitments. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much for your statement, Ambassador. Next on my list I have the delegation of Germany.

Ms. Mikeska (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. We thank the presidency for organizing this meeting and we thank previous speakers for the inspiring contributions.

The German Government is committed to increasing the participation of women in disarmament processes. It seems obvious to us that diversity improves processes and results. Recently, some very concrete efforts were made. One initiative to make foreign and security conferences, meetings and delegations more diverse is the Women Experts' Network on Foreign and Security Policy. The Network was created by the Centre for Feminist Foreign

Policy with support from the German Federal Foreign Office and the Open Society Foundation.

This database is publicly accessible and consists of female, foreign and security policy experts. Through quick and easy access to a broad network of experts from politics, research industry and civil society, it seeks to enhance women's participation in project implementation, conferences and panel discussions. The Network was launched last year.

Another initiative is the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control. It was established in 2019 by Germany, together with the African Union, Ghana and Namibia, and is coordinated by the non-governmental organization Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. Germany is one of the leading actors in the field of small arms control and the second biggest funder of respective initiatives worldwide. Strengthening gender-responsive small arms control is one of our priority areas, and we consider the equal, full and effective participation of women in all policy, planning and implementation processes a precondition for effective small arms control. In addition, to develop effective policies and programmes, the different impacts of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on women, men, girls and boys need to be taken into account.

Germany continues to support the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control politically and financially. The Network brings together State and non-State actors from all over the world and aims at strengthening the participation of women in all levels of small arms control. With training, research, publications, media campaigns and global conferences, the Network serves as a platform for cross-regional exchange and best practice examples with a particular focus on West and East Africa, Latin America and the Western Balkans.

In recent years, Germany has, furthermore, increased its funding for relevant advocacy work and training, as well as research, and has integrated gender markers into its funding policies on small arms control. It goes without saying that against this backdrop, we continue to consider a gender-inclusive rewording of the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament both a banality and a very important step. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Madam. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, everyone. First of all I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new Ambassador of Germany, my new neighbour in every sense of the word. On behalf of my delegation, I wish him every success for his mission in Geneva. Welcome, Ambassador.

Mr. President, France believes that the participation and inclusion of women in building international peace and security are essential. Accordingly, I wish to thank you for holding this meeting, which reflects the growing momentum within our multilateral forums for the much-needed inclusion and full, active and effective participation of women at the negotiating table. I particularly welcome the statements made by women at the Conference on Disarmament today. While inspiring admiration and respect, they have helped move things forward and are role models for a whole generation of women.

France advocates a feminist foreign policy and has long pushed for women to take their place in the disarmament machinery. Ten years ago, at the General Assembly, France voted in favour of the resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, which aimed to increase the participation of women in all decision-making processes on issues relating to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Similarly, France joined the consensus on 11 resolutions on these matters at the Assembly's seventy-fifth session.

On a more general note, last year we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, which recognized the significant impact of armed conflict on women and girls. Since then, France has been proactive in promoting the women and peace and security agenda. At the international level, during the French presidency of the G7, this was established as one of the key issues and was included on the agenda of the Dinard and Saint-Malo meeting of ministers under the heading of participation of women and protection and reintegration of victims of sexual violence.

More recently, in 2021, my country hosted the Generation Equality Forum organized by UN-Women, which it co-chaired with Mexico. As has already been mentioned, the Forum took the form of a hybrid event held in Paris from 30 June to 2 July. The opening ceremony, which was broadcast live, was watched by around 135,000 people. The French President Emmanuel Macron and some 250 other dignitaries attended in person. Over the three days, the Forum's digital platform made it possible to host 100 events and around 650 speakers. The Generation Equality Forum saw the launch of a global acceleration plan to advance gender equality, driven by six action coalitions. In terms of successes, the Forum raised \$40 billion for investment for women and girls. Overall, the event was the largest global gathering in support of gender equality since the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

France nonetheless believes that a more proactive approach to gender equality in disarmament forums is possible, and it is therefore continuing its efforts to achieve parity. For example, we endorse the proposals to include more women in disarmament negotiations to allow them to participate fully in the process of building international peace and security.

Promoting gender equality and gender responsiveness at all levels of the United Nations system is one of the General Assembly's commitments. France deeply regrets that consensus could not be achieved on the proposal by the Canadian presidency to update the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament to include the female equivalents of male titles and positions. As you know, this failure occurred on 5 August. Some delegations here have argued that there is no gender discrimination in the Conference on Disarmament. So why not bring documents into line with practice? My delegation has not received a response to this simple question, which leads us to believe that those who oppose this change in fact have hidden agendas. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. Next on our list is the delegate of Algeria, who will be joining remotely.

Mr. Soualem (Algeria) (*via video link, spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to welcome the Ambassador of Germany and to congratulate him on his appointment. I wish him every success in his new role in Geneva. Mr. President, I wish to thank you for organizing this debate on the participation and role of women in addressing issues related to international peace and security. We also thank all speakers for their relevant presentations.

Algeria attaches particular importance to promoting the role of women in peacebuilding. It believes that the women and peace and security agenda stemming from Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) provides a framework for evaluating the progress that has been made and the problems that women must still overcome in conflict-affected areas.

Over the last two decades, a broad consensus has emerged on the fact that peace processes have a better prospect of success when women participate, despite differences of opinion on how best to achieve this goal. The effective participation of women in peacebuilding has become a key issue for the international community. In this vein, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, pointed out in his Agenda for Disarmament that ensuring gender parity in matters of disarmament was both "a moral duty and an operational necessity".

My delegation wishes to stress that the international community should ensure that women participate more fully in negotiating processes and peace agreements. Furthermore, dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders such as regional organizations and civil society should be strengthened to better understand the challenges that women face in their mediation and conflict-prevention activities, especially on the African continent.

My country has worked to promote dialogue through the organization of a high-level seminar on African women in mediation processes, which was held in the city of Constantine, followed by the first general assembly of the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, which also took place in Algeria. Algerian women played a key role in the liberation of my country and have suffered the ravages of colonialism. After Algeria regained its independence, their reconstruction and development efforts were exemplary.

Algeria, secure in its belief in the effective role of women in building lasting societies, has reinforced its legal system to guarantee the protection and advancement of women at all levels. Gender equality in public is enshrined in the Constitution. Today, many women serve as ambassadors in different parts of the world in the multilateral sphere.

My country had the honour of being represented by a woman during its presidency of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and as Chair of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Algeria is also proud to hold the current presidency of the working group in charge of preparing an international convention on cybercrime. Furthermore, the equal legal status of women and men in the armed forces, the promotion of female soldiers and their access to the highest ranks of the Algerian security forces have become a tangible reality. Algeria has also decided to boost the recruitment of women in the police and auxiliary forces, where many women serve as commanders. My delegation believes that greater consideration should be given to the role of women, especially their participation in peace processes, to drive progress and sustainable development. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Sir. The representative of the Russian Federation has requested the floor.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, we have already spoken on the question of women's participation in tackling international security issues, particularly disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. I have taken the floor now to exercise my right of reply to the statement of the Ambassador of Ukraine.

We listened with interest to our Ukrainian colleague. We were impressed by the increase in the number of women serving in the armed forces of Ukraine. These figures are very revealing in terms of how the Kyiv authorities are militarizing the entire population of the country.

We can conclude from the statement of the Ambassador of Ukraine that Ukrainian female soldiers will be actively engaged in carrying out inhumane plans to destroy their own citizens who, in 2014, clearly and unambiguously expressed their disagreement with the policy being pursued by the Kyiv authorities and ventured to take up arms to protect not only their freedoms and rights but also their lives.

Thus, judging by the Ambassador's statement, Kyiv is ready to sacrifice tens of thousands more women to satisfy the extremely dangerous ambitions of the Kyiv authorities. I would like to point out that hundreds of women in south-eastern Ukraine have already become victims of this policy.

In this connection, I would also like to point out that the vision of the role of women that the Ambassador of Ukraine has presented to us is hardly consistent with the principles of humanism on which the United Nations was founded, and that this vision is certainly no longer in any way related to the equal participation of women and men in tackling international security issues and, more specifically, those related to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. Ukraine has requested the floor. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Ms. Filipenko (Ukraine): Thank you, Mr. President, I will not dignify the Russian delegation's narrative with a response because the international community has already provided a clear response to the Russian actions against Ukraine by adopting eight General Assembly resolutions. Other documents have been adopted by many international organizations, including those located in Geneva.

In those decisions, the international community clearly stated what the Russian action represented: armed aggression and the occupation and attempted annexation of Ukraine's territory. I thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. We have a request for the floor from the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*) Mr. President, I apologize for taking the floor a second time. I was not talking about the situation in Ukraine; in this case, I was only talking about the policy that, according to the Ambassador of Ukraine, the Kyiv authorities are pursuing with regard to women and their participation in hostilities and armed conflicts. But since the questions of so-called aggression on the part of Russia, annexation and so on and so forth have been raised, I would like to say that thus far the Ukrainian authorities have not provided a single piece of evidence of the presence of the armed forces of the Russian Federation on Ukrainian territory, particularly in south-eastern Ukraine, and their participation in combat operations.

Let me remind you that, since 2014, Ukraine has been conducting a counter-terrorism operation in the territory of south-eastern Ukraine, and the Kyiv authorities have thus been carrying out an operation against their own citizens in Luhansk and Donetsk Regions.

As for the so-called annexation, let me remind you once again that, in 2014, the residents of Crimea almost unanimously, by an overwhelming majority of nearly 90 per cent, voted for separation from Ukraine, anticipating the negative consequences of the regime that came to power in Kyiv in 2014 and which is pursuing an inhumane policy against the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions and their residents. In essence, that is what I wanted to point out.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, and with this last statement we conclude the panel organized by my delegation on the role of women in international security. We are grateful for the meaningful participation of all delegations, which demonstrates the high level of commitment to and interest in this issue on the international agenda.

I now intend to turn to the revised draft annual report of the Conference on Disarmament, document CD/WP.636/Rev.1, distributed by the secretariat on Tuesday, 30 August. The secretariat has distributed a version of the changes made to this document for ease of reference. This revised draft is based on the views expressed during the formal plenary and during my extensive bilateral consultations with delegations. I will begin by setting out the main changes.

Let me warn you from the start that we were unable to incorporate all the concerns of the delegations but have tried to find a middle ground. I know that not everyone will be happy with these changes, but I believe that they reflect in part the concerns of all the delegations present. We request the utmost flexibility for this exercise. Not everything can be achieved in this negotiation process. I therefore ask for some flexibility in this matter. My intention is to formally explain these changes and then give the floor to any delegations that wish to take it in a formal setting, and in the absence of requests for the floor, to turn this meeting into an informal meeting in order to discuss paragraph by paragraph the changes that have been made.

Firstly, paragraph 4 of this draft was revised – the names of the countries assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament were removed, and the wording used in the revised draft is now in line with that used in the 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports. The secretariat has also provided an appendix, appendix I, which lists the 2021 session Presidents, as was done in 2020. This year, at the request of the six Presidents of the current session, a mention of the names of the respective Ambassadors has been added to the appendix. I would also like to emphasize that the Chilean presidency consulted the five other Presidents of this session, none of whom had any objection to these changes.

In paragraph 12, a new sentence has now been inserted to reflect the outcome of the discussions on the observer requests. It reads: “The Conference did not reach an agreement on five of these requests.” The secretariat has added a reference to the relevant verbatim records, and there is now another appendix, appendix II, which includes the relevant extracts from those plenary meetings.

Paragraph 17 has also been revised and no longer lists the names of the Presidents who submitted proposals on a programme of work; instead, it states that the first three Presidents of this year’s session of the Conference conducted consultations on a programme of work.

Paragraph 23 has been revised to include two additional sentences reflecting the different positions on updating the Conference’s rules of procedure. The new sentences read

as follows: “Divergent opinions were expressed on the operational and procedural aspects of the proposals. Delegations expressed their positions on the issue, which are duly reflected in the plenary records (CD/PV.1586).”

Paragraph 24 has also been amended, in terms of both its content and its location in the report, following the views formally expressed by a regional group and some delegations on the holding of a formal plenary meeting, on the basis of a national working document. The new paragraph reads as follows: “A plenary meeting was convened by the President of the Conference, Ms. Leslie E. Norton, Ambassador of Canada, on 10 August. Discussions are duly reflected in the plenary records (CD/PV.1587).”

In part III, on the substantive work of the Conference during its 2021 session, the paragraphs referring to the thematic plenaries convened by the Presidents have been modified. I will read the paragraph from section A: “Thematic discussions on agenda item 1 entitled “Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament” were organized by respective Presidents on 11 and 12 May.” Analogous wording was included in sections B to G.

Section H now reflects the plenary meeting held just last week, on the participation and role of women in international security, under my presidency.

Finally, on the dates of the 2022 session, I suggest revising the language that was used in paragraph 54 of the first draft, now paragraph 56, which reads as follows: “In case of scheduling difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the disarmament calendar, the Conference on Disarmament schedule for its 2022 session would be as follows”. The paragraph then lists the dates of the three parts of the Conference. In the first part, our suggestion is to begin the session of the Conference in accordance with the rules of procedure on 24 January, for one day, before going into recess until 8 February.

Finally, dear delegates, please note that the secretariat has updated the names of the dignitaries in the high-level segment and made other editorial changes, including new paragraph numbering.

Now, the idea is to proceed, in thematic order, I hope, to those delegations that wish to take the floor in this formal meeting to comment on the paragraphs in question. We will begin with the first paragraph, paragraph 4. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I understand that Morocco, participating remotely, requested the floor earlier.

Mr. Kabbaj (Morocco) (*via video link, spoke in Arabic*): I am taking the floor on behalf of the Arab Group. We wish at the outset to express our gratitude and appreciation for your preparation of the draft annual report. We also wish to reiterate the Group’s previous position in support of the participation of all States as observers, given that the Conference on Disarmament is a venue for multilateral dialogue. It is also an effective international mechanism that upholds the principles of international dialogue and facilitates discussions aimed at addressing issues relating to disarmament and international peace and security. The Conference is the leading multilateral United Nations body when it comes to laying the groundwork for the multilateral system.

Accordingly, the Arab Group wishes to make the following comment on the draft report: the fact that four Arab States have been unable to participate in the work of the Conference sets a dangerous precedent and constitutes a phenomenon that the Conference has not witnessed since its establishment. The Arab Group therefore requests, on behalf of the States that have been unable to participate in the work of the Conference, that the final report adopt a fair and transparent approach and reflect the positions of all countries, since the non-participating Arab States have submitted a position paper setting out their views on their inability to participate. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Sir. Before giving the floor to the next delegation, I would like to say that I hope we can go paragraph by paragraph for methodological reasons, so that we can really see where the problems or concerns are with respect to each paragraph. We give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. In line with your desire, I can wait until we get to paragraph 12 and then I would like to take the floor.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. Would any delegation like to take the floor on paragraph 4? The Ambassador of the Russian Federation wishes to take the floor.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*) Mr. President, I would just like to confirm that we are comfortable with the new wording of paragraph 4 and the corresponding changes in other paragraphs, which do not directly list the countries that presided over the Conference on Disarmament, but only the respective presidencies. The only thing I wanted to point out about paragraph 17 is that the word “successive” is repeated twice here – in the “Track changes” version of the document. It is probably redundant. It appears once in the clean document. So that there is no misunderstanding, we would like to draw attention to this fact.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the Russian Federation very much. We can now move on to paragraph 12 for those delegations that wish to formally take the floor. I believe the Ambassador of the United States of America would like to take the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President, with regard to paragraph 12, my delegation believes the new language in document CD/WP.636/Rev.1, your proposed revision, does not reflect my delegation’s consistent position that this report needs to be fact-based. Specifically, this draft report does not clearly specify the fact that requests to observe the Conference on Disarmament’s 2021 session by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Republic of Yemen were blocked by the Islamic Republic of Iran. This is factual and needs to be included in the report. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I now give the floor to the delegation from Tunisia via video link. We will give the delegation of Tunisia the floor later, as we have technical problems. The Russian Federation has requested the floor.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*) Mr. President, the Russian delegation supports your efforts to draw up a factual report of the Conference on Disarmament that most accurately reflects the discussions at the Conference and the situation at the Conference as a whole. However, in the pursuit of accuracy, clarity and evidential relevance, we must not forget that we will have to agree on this report by consensus.

In that connection, I would like to make a suggestion on paragraph 12, which I think will help us to forge a compromise and thus reach a consensus. I suggest that, in the text that you have already submitted, after the words “in its work” you add the phrase “as observers from the States that are named in the Conference documents” and enumerate the documents containing the lists of countries that have applied for observer status. And shorten the last sentence in this paragraph by putting a full stop after the last document symbol, CD/PV.1564. I will explain why we suggest this.

We have carefully studied the appendix that you and the secretariat have prepared, and I am afraid that, first of all, it does not fully reflect the discussions that took place on this issue at the Conference, nor does it reflect the positions expressed not only by the States that applied for observer status but also by those countries that objected to those applications. In addition to those parties, other States spoke, and it seems to me that if we are going to fully reflect the discussions, it would be important to reflect the positions of all States in the appendices that are attached to the report; otherwise, there would be some discrimination against individual delegations. In order not to burden the report with such a lengthy appendix, I therefore suggest that we simply limit ourselves to listing the relevant documents containing the records of the meetings at which the question of obtaining observer status was discussed.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Russian Federation very much for the proposal, which we will take into consideration. We now have Tunisia via video link.

Mr. Taous (Tunisia) (*via video link, spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. I wish to take this opportunity to welcome the Ambassadors and colleagues who have recently arrived in Geneva and to congratulate them on their new assignments. I wish them every success and assure them of my delegation’s willingness to engage in constructive cooperation.

I also wish to thank you, Mr. President, for your efforts to prepare the draft final report. My delegation expresses its support in this regard for the statement made on behalf of the Arab Group and underscores the importance of permitting all States to participate as observers in the work of the Conference if they so wish. This constitutes a principled position in defence of the vital role of the Conference of Disarmament as an effective and sustainable international mechanism for promoting international dialogue. It is important to take advantage of its multilateral role to enrich discussions and consultations aimed at finding effective solutions to issues of disarmament and of international peace and security.

Accordingly, Mr. President, the inability of four Arab States to participate in the work of the Conference constitutes a violation of the principles of constructive dialogue on which the multilateral system is based and undermines the ability of the Conference to offer effective solutions. My country's delegation therefore calls for the avoidance of such an approach in the final report. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Mr. President, first of all, you went a bit fast for me because you went from paragraph 4 to paragraph 12. If you allow me, I also want to come back to paragraphs which have not been changed – or maybe the changes that had been made to them did not find their way into your new draft.

I would come back to paragraph 6 and would like to ask the secretariat whether this is factually correct, since if my recollection is correct the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament was present at plenary meetings and addressed the plenary meetings on several instances, not only on 19 January 2021. I recall the meeting we had on updating the language of the rules of procedure, in which the Secretary-General made a formal presentation and intervention.

My first question to the secretariat, then, is whether this paragraph can be updated. And as you know – though this will come up later, when we get to it – I proposed to add a reference to Secretary-General Valovaya's statement on this issue in paragraph 23. But we can also address it in paragraph 6.

Now, going to paragraph 12, fully in line with the statement made by the Arab Group, the European Union has a common position: all the States Members of the United Nations should be allowed as observers to this Conference.

I also am in agreement with the Russian delegation that, in this paragraph, and in all paragraphs, there should be an actual and factual representation of what happened and of the positions of delegations. I have to see his proposal, which could be an interesting one, on paper, so I would like to ask him to submit it to the secretariat; we can look at it for paragraph 12. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador, and indeed we request the Russian Federation to send us its proposal in writing to avoid any mistakes we may have made when we took note of it during the statement. The Ambassador of France has requested the floor.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. Regarding paragraph 12, I agree with what was said by other delegations before me. In general, we believe that it is a very important topic and that we have dealt a serious blow to multilateralism at the start of the meeting by refusing to grant observer status to five countries. This has been the subject of long discussions and should be reflected in an honest and factual manner. Your proposals in the latest revision are very clearly going in the right direction, so we wish to thank you, as we are making progress.

I must say the proposals by Russia deserve particular attention. Our delegation had questions regarding appendix II because it is selective. Indeed, as my Russian colleague has said, it contains extracts of the discussion from only some countries and I wonder whether that is the way we should reflect what happened. Also, I have noticed another, more general anomaly – countries that have requested observer status have not been able to make their case

to the Conference on Disarmament or to address this forum at any point. I think this is something that should also be mentioned in this paragraph. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. The delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran has the floor.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President, and good morning, colleagues. Like other delegations, I would like to welcome the new Ambassador of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament and wish him success and all the best.

Mr. President, we appreciate your efforts to prepare the draft of the final report of the Conference on Disarmament. As for the new version, we have some observations, particularly on some of the paragraphs, but before going to those paragraphs, I would like to raise some points.

I really appreciate that some delegations, particularly the delegation of the United States, said that the report should be fact-based. Through you, Mr. President, I ask the representative of the United States whether in 2019, when a request made by Palestine was rejected, the United States position was the same and it requested that the report of the Conference on Disarmament should be fact-based. An end must be put to these double standards and discriminatory approaches.

Let me also raise another point. In 2018 and 2019, some of the delegations, when addressing the Presidents, used the word “regime”. All of a sudden, this year, they were more Catholic than the Pope, and they requested that delegations use the correct name of those countries. Through you, Mr. President, I ask those delegations as well whether they were honest in their approach when they addressed Presidents during the debates in 2018 and 2019.

Mr. President, let me go to just another point, the third point: I think the United States colleague was not factual in his statement today. Five requests were rejected by the Conference; he named just four of those countries but not the fifth one. This is another fact that we should take into consideration.

Mr. President, I really do not want to propose anything controversial and I really want to be as constructive as possible to help you and your dedicated team to finalize this report. On paragraph 12, we have the established precedents of 2018 and 2019 – we appreciate your efforts, Mr. President, and for paragraph 12, we propose to copy the wording used in 2018 and 2019.

If you allow me, I will read that wording. Paragraph 12, in accordance with that wording, would read (the first sentence is exactly the same): “In accordance with the rules of procedure and the decision taken at its 1990 session on its improved and effective functioning (CD/1036), the Conference received and considered 39 requests for participation in its work. Accordingly, the Conference invited the following non-member States to participate in its work.” Then we mention the names of the countries that have been approved by the Conference. Paragraph 13 would read: “The following documents dealing with the issue of attendance and participation of States not members of the Conference were submitted to the Conference.” And then, as specified by our colleagues from Russia, we mention the symbols of the documents that contain the names of the countries that made requests to participate in the 2021 session.

I could live with that, Mr. President, and I thank you again.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Sir. I give the floor to the delegate from Pakistan

Mr. Omar (Pakistan): Mr. President, on behalf of my delegation, please allow me to thank you once again for the circulation of the revised draft of the Conference on Disarmament’s report. We remain confident that under your able guidance, we will be able to reach agreement on the annual report in a timely manner.

Mr. President, my delegation continues to see your draft as a good basis for continuing negotiations. In our view, the overall draft, document CD/WP.636/Rev.1, demonstrates an effort on your part to take on broad views from all members, even as they have sometimes been in different directions. We understand that the current draft is not perfect by any means

and we all have our observations on various paragraphs, some of which some members may prefer and others which other members may prefer. However, my delegation supports the spirit of your approach in trying to find solutions that can command consensus in a balanced and objective manner.

Regarding the paragraph under discussion, on participation by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Yemen, my delegation's position is on the record. We supported the participation by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Yemen at the Conference. We continue to do so today and will also continue to do so in the future. Regarding the exact language of the report, my delegation stands ready to support your efforts, Mr. President, to find language that commands consensus and is objective and balanced. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Sir, for your words of support. I give the floor to the delegate from Egypt, via video link.

Mr. Reda (Egypt) (*via video link*): Thank you, Mr. President, and good morning, colleagues. First, allow me to start by welcoming the Ambassador of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament and to assure him of my delegation's full support.

Mr. President, I would like to thank you and your team for all the efforts you have been making in the past weeks and for the transparent, inclusive and flexible manner in which you have conducted our work.

In our first meeting under your presidency, my delegation welcomed the first version of the Conference's report, since you presented a straightforward, factual report that reflects, unfortunately, the very little work that we have done this year. We support your approach.

We believe that the second version of the report takes into consideration the different positions that were expressed, and on this basis I will limit my comments now to paragraph 12, on the participation of States and of members of the Conference, and as previously expressed by my delegation, our position on the participation of non-member States as observers in the Conference has been and continues to be consistent over the years. Unfortunately, this year we witnessed an unprecedented incident, as five States were denied the opportunity to participate as observers in the work of the Conference. We strongly reiterate our support for those States and we believe that this paragraph needs to be amended to reflect the fact that this unprecedented incident occurred.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement and proposal made by the delegation of Morocco on behalf of the Arab Group. We have heard as well several other interventions from different delegations in the same vein, and with regard to the Russian proposal, I think we need to see it in writing to be able to comment on it, but in general, I think we can also fully support it as well the arguments made by our colleague from the Russian delegation.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to seize this opportunity to call upon all delegations to show their utmost flexibility so that we can adopt our report and end this year on a positive note, hoping that next year the Conference will be able to resume substantive work. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate from Egypt very much. The Ambassador of the United States of America has the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President, my apologies for taking the floor, but I need to respond to some remarks that were made by the representative of Iran.

Just to go back a little bit in time, when an entity had previously requested observer status at the Conference on Disarmament – it may have been in 2018 – my delegation had no problem in terms of having on the record that we objected to that observer request. That still is the position of the United States – should that request be put forward by that entity, we would indeed raise an objection to its observer request.

With regard to the issue that was raised by the Iranian representative regarding Cyprus, and when that issue came up in plenary meetings a couple of years ago – when that request was blocked by a certain country, I took the floor to object to Cyprus's being blocked from

observing the Conference on Disarmament. So, I want to be very clear: if I say something on the record in a plenary meeting, I have no problem seeing it reflected in the final Conference on Disarmament report for that session.

There seems to be a problem with some in this room when they have spoken on the record – and we have verbatim records of what they have said. There seems to be a problem when it comes to having their views expressed in the final report. I just want to be very clear on that, Mr. President, and I would suggest to the Iranian delegate that he needs to get his facts straight before taking the floor. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Ambassador. The delegate from Algeria has the floor.

Mr. Berkat (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for your tireless efforts to reach a consensus on the draft final report of the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament as soon as possible. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize my country's position of principle, which is that we believe in multilateralism and that everyone should have the chance to voice his or her opinions. My delegation restates its commitment to having broader and more inclusive participation in the Conference and stresses that the consideration of requests should be given greater attention. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Sir. The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran has requested the floor.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you once again to those delegations that support multilateralism. We also support that very nice concept and multilateral diplomacy. We have seen tremendous attacks over the past four or five years, particularly by one delegation, by the Trump Administration, the United States Administration, on multilateralism and multilateral institutions, but through you, Mr. President, I ask those delegations that raised concerns regarding multilateralism and the necessity of participation by all member States in multilateral organizations whether they raise concerns in other forums and other international organizations when a request by my country was blocked for more than two decades. I wonder if they were so vocal in those international forums. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic via video link.

Mr. Ali (Syrian Arab Republic) (*via video link, spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President, including for the extensive bilateral and multilateral consultations you have held with member States and for your efforts to bridge points of view, which resulted in the first revised version of the draft annual report. Although this version did not take into account all of our proposals, our delegation considers it a step in the right direction and one that brings the Conference on Disarmament closer to a consensus on the annual report.

At this stage, I wish to make the following observations. First, bearing in mind that appendix I of the report clearly lists the names of the Presidents of the Conference for the session, our delegation supports deleting the names of the Presidents from the rest of the report to ensure that the text is consistent and merely mentioning them in the appendix, as suggested. With regard to paragraph 12, I share the concerns of the representative of Iran that we should not apply double standards when dealing with this issue. Our delegation is prepared to support his proposal, as well as the proposal of the Russian delegation on this paragraph. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation supports you in continuing to organize this kind of discussion around the annual report. Given that we are running out of time and that, as you have just mentioned to me there may be some restrictions in the Palais des Nations in terms of the availability of meeting rooms this week, I do not want to take up any more of everyone's time for discussions around issues other than the text – that is, discussions not on the text itself but on other issues.

As for paragraph 12, we all experienced what happened at the beginning of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament. In the course of the discussion just now, as we all reviewed the events at the beginning of this year and the events of the past few years, I think we all have a clear understanding of the context of these events, including the deep background and the reasons for them.

On the one hand, I think the member States of the Conference would like to see all States Members of the United Nations have the opportunity to participate in the work of the Conference as observers. I feel that this is a general wish, and this general wish should be recognized by the vast majority of member States of the Conference. China has always held such an attitude on the issue of observers. We do not want politicized factors to influence the work around this issue.

At the same time, we must also face the fact that some of the complex politicized elements of the past few years are still heavily influencing the work of the Conference. We hope that through the joint efforts of member States, as we look forward and consider our future work, we will be able to increasingly avoid and even eventually dissolve these unhealthy politicized elements. This will require the joint efforts of all member States concerned.

As for the text of paragraph 12 of the report, I endorse the spirit of the statements just made by the representatives of Egypt and Russia. We, too, are willing to continue to work on the text of paragraph 12 under your leadership and on the basis of the ideas and proposals put forward in the statements made earlier by the colleagues concerned so that we can find a solution that will finally address the concerns of all and at the same time be realistic.

We will continue to support your work. In the meantime, we remain firmly confident that we will eventually be able to conclude such a report, and conclude it by consensus. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I give the floor to the delegation from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Díaz Mendoza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, I would like to cordially welcome the Ambassador of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament. In addition, my delegation would like to acknowledge the work of the presidency. We agree that your efforts and the manner in which you have conducted our meetings are bringing us to a good conclusion. I believe that we are close to reaching a compromise for an agreement by consensus on the paragraphs that are still posing difficulties. We consider this document a good starting point and believe it reflects the efforts you have been making to consult with all the delegations. However, like everyone else, we have our own views and our own opinions about the text.

Now, with regard to the paragraph under discussion, I would like to echo the comments of the delegate of Iran and the Ambassador of China; it would be a good idea to have the proposal of the delegation of Russia in writing. I believe that this proposal could help us find a compromise, a solution that is acceptable to all parties. However, my delegation also shares the view that the solution that was found for 2019 and 2020 could be a compromise for this year. It worked then and we do not understand why it cannot work this year. We are all aware, and it is a fact, that this problem did not start this year – it started in 2018, when the delegation of the United States blocked another delegation from participating in the Conference. This is not new.

For my delegation, then, a quick solution, which already has everyone's approval, could be to return to the text that we already agreed upon in previous years. However, we are willing to review the proposal of the Russian delegation in order to reach an agreement satisfactory to all parties. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. Before I give the floor to other delegates, I would like, first of all, to reiterate to those delegations that have made formal proposals on the text that they please send them to the secretariat. Secondly, I would like to make an observation regarding this and other paragraphs. The original version of this paragraph, before this new version, has a history, as has been pointed out by several delegations. I was not there last year or the year before, but from what I hear in the room and

what I have been told, we are essentially repeating the same arguments from previous years. It was a very complex process, especially this issue of paragraph 12. In the end, a compromise was reached. This compromise was reflected in the first document that was circulated. This new revision is an attempt to go a little further, perhaps because this year a greater number of countries raised objections. No particular country is mentioned. No reference is made to any such thing – the aim is to be neutral.

I ask the delegations not to try to somehow put everything they would like to in the paragraph because I expect that it will not be possible. I see that there are divergent positions on the matter, and I ask you to compromise – we are dealing with a paragraph that is complex, that has roots that go beyond this document, which was already discussed in detail under the previous presidencies. Let us not repeat that discussion now. Let us try to focus on the wording, on reaching a compromise.

I will add another comment. We do not have all the time in the world. There are no rooms in the Palais for several of the next few days – we do not have a room for at least several days next week, as there are other meetings. I am told that the rooms were requested, but, unfortunately, they were not allocated. Therefore, let us try to limit our comments on the wording, and as for the possibility of agreements, let us try to compromise because we do not have all the time in the world. That is why I am asking for your kind assistance to work in this way, referring only to the paragraphs and trying to avoid the discussions that have already taken place in the Palais des Nations, on which we have already spent enough time.

With that, with a view to being able to cover the remaining paragraphs, I give the floor to the delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. In line with what you have just said, we fully support that concept and your spirit of compromise.

I think all of the delegations can agree on the fact that we are working on a procedural report, not a substantive report, and we should avoid entering into substantive issues that were discussed. Having said that, I think that if we want to reflect the positions of all countries in the verbatim records, then the most important issue that was under discussion was definitely the programme of work, on which we spent almost 10 weeks, the first part of the 2021 session, so in order to avoid repeating what is in those records, it is better to focus on a procedural report that suits everybody. I think all the delegations can compromise on that. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I think that concludes paragraph 12, at least for now.

We are going to move on to some comments on paragraph 17. The Netherlands has the floor.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President. We have no problem mentioning the successive Presidents here, so we could support that. I made a proposal to this end because, as the delegation of Iran said, we spent 10 weeks on the programme of work. We also spent nearly 10 weeks on the discussion on the subsidiary bodies; those discussions are not reflected here, so I reiterate my proposal to include wording indicating that the Presidents also made proposals for the establishment of subsidiary bodies. I sent that proposal to you in writing previously, but it is not reflected here anymore. I would like to see it reflected again. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. Indeed, your proposal was received, but several delegations objected – not one but several. I consulted directly with the presidencies that discussed this issue, and we reached an agreement that the issue being discussed was the programme of work and that the subsidiary bodies were a part of that discussion, but not the entirety, so to try to find a compromise, this wording was chosen. I am very grateful to the delegation of the Netherlands for its proposal, which we fully understand. The Ambassador of France has the floor.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to say that, while some delegations will perhaps object to the proposal by the Netherlands, many

others have expressed their support. My delegation fully endorses it, and I think it is negotiable. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. The United States of America has the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. I will be very brief. I am basically echoing what the French Ambassador just said: a number of delegations support the addition of subsidiary bodies to the paragraph we are discussing, so I think, as the French Ambassador just said, there is clearly room to negotiate a reference to what was an important element of our work.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. The Netherlands has the floor.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Allow me just to react – you mentioned consultations with those involved – but just for the record I have not been consulted on this issue, although I made a proposal on it. I would thus like to insist on keeping it in and not deleting it. We are talking about what has happened, about a factual report. The fact is that successive Presidents proposed the establishment of subsidiary bodies, and we had lengthy discussions on the proposal, so deleting a reference to the proposal amounts to a selective account of what happened in the room.

We had long discussions of the Presidents' proposals, including even the naming of the coordinators of the different subsidiary bodies. I am sorry if I missed the consultations about this, but I would like to insist that the reference stay here. I also wonder whether we can ask the secretariat to go back to the verbatim records, but there was a lot of support for this proposal. I thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I give the floor to the delegate from Mexico.

Mr. Martínez Ruiz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, my delegation would also like to welcome the Ambassador of Germany and express our desire to work closely and cooperatively with him. I would also like to convey to you that, just as my delegation considered the first proposal you presented to be a suggestion that tried to reflect the session's events in a factual manner and sought a solution that reflected all those events without entering into the controversies of the specific negotiations, we also understand that, based on the comments and suggestions you received from the delegations, you have continued working with the same energy and drive to find language that is acceptable to all delegations and to achieve a consensus on the final report that we must present as a body to the General Assembly.

My delegation's positions on this paragraph are well known; we have already expressed them in formal and informal meetings. I believe that what you said – namely, that the presidencies that presented the document have stated that they submitted different proposals for programmes of work this year – is duly reflected in the paragraph as it is currently drafted. Of course, in the consideration of the programme of work there were different positions on specific aspects of the plans, including the aforementioned subsidiary bodies. The extensive discussion of the specific mandate of the subsidiary bodies, their composition and their subject matter, which was precisely part of what did not allow consensus to be reached in this room, should also be reflected.

My delegation therefore continues to insist that previously, when a programme of work was not adopted, it was stated simply that it was not adopted. We believe that it would not be useful for us to start trying to reflect the specific aspects of what each delegation thought was appropriate in the programme of work, because then all the divergent positions on very operational aspects and even on substantive aspects will have to be reflected in the consideration of the substantive items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. With that in mind, my delegation fully agrees with the text as it is currently drafted. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate from Mexico very much and give the floor to the Cuban Ambassador.

Mr. Quintanilla Román (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, President. Good morning, colleagues. First of all, we also join in welcoming the German Ambassador and wish him every success in his stay and work in Geneva. Regarding the draft, Mr. President, allow me to acknowledge the work you have been doing to reach consensus on the issues that are still pending. We agree that we have little time or even space at our disposal, unless we decide to meet on the Place des Nations or in another place that someone offers, so we must speed up our work and be flexible in order to find solutions that suit everyone.

We echo your call. No delegation is going to obtain as much as it would like in this report. That is a fact, and the debates have proved and continue to prove it. Therefore, we must all show flexibility in our words and actions if we are to finish this work. Regarding this paragraph, we also support your proposal. It is clear, it is evident, that no further progress can be made, and therefore we call on all delegations to be flexible so that we can keep making progress. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. South Africa has the floor.

Mr. September (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. Let me start by welcoming the Ambassador from Germany to the Conference on Disarmament.

I will be very brief. Our view is that the focus of the discussions was the programme of work. And according to us, the way that this language is drafted basically captures very clearly exactly what was discussed at the first meetings. It captures it very clearly, and it is clear that delegations expressed their views on the issue of a programme of work, taking account of relevant proposals and suggestions, and that, as part of their suggestions and proposals there was, *inter alia*, the issue of subsidiary bodies. As far as we are concerned, we are quite comfortable with the language that is here, because it is a fair reflection of what was discussed during the first three presidencies of the Conference on Disarmament. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. De Barros Carvalho e Mello Mourão (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I join those who welcome the representative of Germany and I hope his time at the Conference on Disarmament will be more fruitful than it has been so far.

I would like to make a statement, Mr. President, as one of the three Presidents of this Conference who tried to have a programme of work adopted. We were not trying to adopt a decision to establish subsidiary bodies – we were trying to approve programmes of work. That was the item on our agenda, and we discussed the programme of work. The subsidiary bodies were of course a part of the proposals for our programme of work, but we were discussing the programme of work, not the subsidiary bodies.

Some delegations have referred to the fact that we discussed the subsidiary bodies. The interpretation of the facts is very sensitive, because one interpretation of the facts is that some of the dissenting views expressed in the discussions on the subsidiary bodies were expressed not to contest the idea of establishing the subsidiary bodies but actually to block the adoption by the Conference of a programme of work.

What was blocked, then, was not the subsidiary bodies, but a programme of work for this Conference. That was my feeling, which I was able to convey to the other five Presidents of this session, who agreed with me. We did not adopt a programme of work, and that is the factual aspect of our discussions on the subject, Mr. President. I thus join all those who support the wording you included in that paragraph, because it reflects our decisions. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. The delegate of Japan has the floor.

Mr. Matsui (Japan): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me express once again our support for your efforts to ensure that this report is fact-based. It is important for all of us to show flexibility and an ability to compromise. But there are different levels of compromise, and

Japan pursues a higher level of compromise. A compromise can be made to include everything or to exclude everything, but Japan would like to pursue the higher level, and its understanding was that although the discussion on the establishment of subsidiary bodies was, of course, part of the discussion of the programme of work, it was, at the same time, the main part of the discussion. Japan thus supports including the wording referring to the proposal to establish subsidiary bodies. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Ambassador of China has the floor. Many thanks to the delegate of Japan.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I do not want to miss the opportunity of today's meeting to welcome the Ambassador of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament family. I look forward to good and constructive communication and cooperation with him and to contributing together to the work of the Conference.

With regard to the paragraph now under discussion, I share the views just expressed by the Ambassador of Brazil. We will continue to support your efforts to get the text of this paragraph right.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank once again the Ambassadors of Belgium, Bulgaria and Brazil for their important efforts in the run-up to this year's session of the Conference around the issue of the programme of work. I am sure that next year's six Presidents will build on their work to this end. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I have the Ambassador of Bulgaria via video link.

Mr. Sterk (Bulgaria) (*via video link*): Mr. President, I hope you can hear me. I will be very brief. Sorry for taking the floor at the last moment, but I would like first of all to join those who have warmly welcomed the Ambassador of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament and assure him that we will work in a spirit of close cooperation with him, as was the case with his predecessor.

Second, I would like to reiterate our support to you, Mr. President, for your efforts to find a compromise on the paragraphs we are discussing. Third – and this is probably my main point – regarding the interpretation of the efforts which have been deployed by the first three presidencies during this year, the Belgian, Brazilian and Bulgarian presidencies, I fully agree with the views expressed by my colleague from Brazil, Ambassador Mello Mourão. I fully support what he said about our efforts to work towards the adoption of a work programme for the Conference. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. We heard you perfectly. I give the floor to the delegate of Egypt, who will be joining remotely.

Mr. Reda (Egypt) (*via video link*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I will be brief. In the same vein, I fully support the comments made by my colleague from South Africa as well as the Brazilian Ambassador on this specific paragraph. I do not think we need to depict the means – and I mean by this that the subsidiary bodies were just a means to an end, and the end is the programme of work. We have tried different techniques, one recent one being the establishment of subsidiary bodies. We do not need to put this in the paragraph per se, but it is clear that we are talking about the programme of work. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Sir. Before moving on to the next paragraph, I would like to apologize again to the delegations that submitted proposals that are not reflected in this revised draft, but as I pointed out, we were not able to include all the requests. We will try to find a balance between the different paragraphs and between the different requests from the delegations. My team and I tried to work on the wording and in some cases accept some of the proposals, and at other times we preferred not to include them in order to have a balance between the different positions in the room. In any case, we will continue the consultations on this paragraph and see what the final result is.

We now turn to paragraph 23. I note that in this paragraph there is a pending response to a query. We will ask the Secretary to read the verbatim record of that meeting.

Ms. Day (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Thank you, Mr. President, I would leave it to the President in question to convey the spirit of and intentions behind the words that she spoke, but meanwhile, for your reference, I will read the digital transcripts, which will be reflected in the verbatim records in due course.

In presenting the draft decision on 5 August, the President said:

Distinguished delegations, as previously announced, my intention this morning is to discuss the proposed technical linguistic update of the Conference on Disarmament rules of procedure to reflect the equality of men and women at the Conference and to consider adopting the draft decision we have circulated for the English version of the rules of procedure.

The discussion then ensued, and at the very end of the plenary meeting – I believe it was already past 1 p.m. – on the same day, 5 August, the President said:

The question arises as to how to take this forward. So I would ask delegations a question. It's a very simple question. Do you agree to request the secretariat to review the rules of procedure to reflect the equality of men and women as expressed by consensus by the Conference on Disarmament this morning and to reflect this in all official languages on the basis of the English text circulated on 28 July?

And then we thought another useful reference would be the statement at the following plenary meeting, on 10 August, when the President said:

Distinguished colleagues, I would like to start by saying a few words about the two plenary meetings we had last week. I am disappointed that we could not agree on updating the rules of procedure to have them reflect the equality of men and women in the Conference on Disarmament despite support from a large majority of delegations. That said, I am thankful to all of you for participating in the discussion on this important topic.

My assessment is that we will not achieve consensus on this issue during this final week of Canada's presidency, but I encourage States to continue the informal discussions.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary, who read us the verbatim records of those meetings, very much. I now open the floor to delegations that wish to make statements on paragraph 23 as proposed in the revised draft by the Chilean presidency, which sought to strike a balance between the different positions taken. The Ambassador of the United States of America has the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President, and let me just say, and I should have said it earlier, that my delegation appreciates all the efforts you have put into trying to come up with a report that can gain consensus.

Let me go specifically to the paragraph that we are discussing, paragraph 23. As you know, my delegation provided you with suggested language that, in our view, would reflect what happened with the draft decision to update the rules of procedure to make them gender-neutral. Unfortunately, none of that language is included in the revised document, and as I mentioned at the previous plenary meeting, my Government insists that paragraph 23 reflect what happened with regard to the draft decision. Frankly, anything less is not acceptable. We remain flexible on the language and we have said that from the beginning, but we do insist that there be a reference to the fact that that draft decision did not garner consensus. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Australia.

Ms. Mansfield (Australia): Thank you, Mr. President, and may I also join others in giving our German colleague a very warm welcome to the Conference on Disarmament.

We thank you and your team, Mr. President, for all the work that you have done on the revised draft of the annual report (CD/WP.636/Rev.1). Our delegation has considered it very carefully. I would also like to thank, perhaps retrospectively, the group of the year's six

Presidents for all the work it has done over the course of the year. It has been very much appreciated.

In terms of where we are now with the draft, we very much appreciate some of the new language in this version, but referring specifically to paragraph 23, we have serious concerns. We welcome the inclusion in this paragraph of our suggested language on the reference to the relevant verbatim record. Our suggested language on the outcome of the Conference's consideration of the matter – i.e., that consensus was not reached – has, however, not been included, and we think it is important that it is. As the secretariat's reading of the verbatim record has just illustrated, there was a draft decision that was put forward to this body, and we think that, in keeping with the way other draft decisions were approached, the outcome must be reflected in this report.

We have been very clear both in our statements during the plenaries and in our written submission about the importance we attach to this. We have heard no arguments in the plenary meetings or seen any written suggestions from other delegations raising concerns with our proposed language. Indeed, it is the well-established practice of the Conference for the report to record the outcome of decisions put to the Conference during the year. This includes adoption of the agenda, the programme of work, observer requests and any other decisions that were put to the Conference. And, of course, this is consistent with rule 45 (d) of the rules of procedure. Here, we seem at risk of deviating from this practice and we see no reason for doing so.

Furthermore, Australia does not support the inclusion of the new sentence in paragraph 23 that reads as follows: "Divergent views were expressed on the procedural and operational aspects of the proposal." We find this reference misleading. As the record of the plenary meeting will show, divergent views were indeed expressed, although not just on the procedural and operational aspects of the proposal but also on the need for the proposal at all. We would like to see the report be accurate in terms of the Conference's consideration of this matter, and the best way to do that would be a simple factual statement, as we have proposed, on the outcome – i.e., that consensus was not reached.

My delegation and I in particular would have been very pleased had that not been the outcome of the session, but unfortunately it was, and the report should reflect that. Thank you very much for your consideration and, again, we express our sincere appreciation for how difficult it is to draft this report but stress how important it is for our language to be accurate.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. We now have the delegate from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cleobury (United Kingdom): Thank you very much indeed, Mr. President, and good afternoon, colleagues.

Mr. President, let me thank you for providing us with the revised draft report of the Conference on Disarmament. We think, on the whole, we have done a good job at balancing the different views and we recognize that you have an unenviable task in trying to get us to consensus on this. Having said that, we feel compelled to comment on the drafting in paragraph 23. Like other delegations, we presented to you written proposals on this paragraph which were shared with everyone, and we proposed that a factual statement be made to record the fact that the draft decision put forward for consideration at this meeting was not adopted.

We suggested wording indicating that the Conference did not succeed in reaching consensus on the draft decisions. And, as I have said, other delegations have made similar requests. This proposal was not taken on board in the revised draft. However, we see that language has come into this draft that was not proposed on the floor or in written submissions, and we refer to the sentence that was just read out by the Ambassador of Australia, which begins "divergent views were expressed". We would welcome an explanation of where this sentence has come from, who has proposed it and, indeed, what is the meaning behind it, because we are not quite sure what it means.

Mr. President, we will insist that this paragraph accurately reflect the outcome of the meeting on 5 August – namely, that there was no agreement on the draft decision. We are willing to be flexible on the formulation, but the recording of this fact must be included in

this report. In other places, there are references to this Conference's not reaching an agreement. We must be consistent and avoid any distortion of what actually happened at this meeting. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): My team and I made the proposal. In that respect, we are responsible for it and, indeed, instead of accepting one of the proposals made by the delegations, we tried to find a balance between divergent positions, as stated in the text, and somehow reach a consensus. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President. This is not an easy task for you. Thank you also for the clarification on this sentence, because we, too, were puzzled about where it came from, since it was not submitted in writing or put forward in the plenary meeting. Our position is similar to that of others: this is an important paragraph for my delegation, too. We think what happened here should be accurately reflected. A draft decision was proposed, and a tiny minority blocked this decision. That was possible because we needed a consensus decision, but that should be reflected in the report. It is an important issue. It was a small issue that could have been resolved easily had it not been blocked.

I come back to paragraph 6, as I said I would, this time in connection with paragraph 23. And again I would like to ask the secretariat whether it is accurate, because the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament was also present during the formal debate in the plenary meeting, and she voiced her support for the draft decision. That was in her statement, so my proposal, which was already made, is to add the fact that the Secretary-General was present at this meeting and clearly voiced support for the draft decision. That is what I would like to include. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. The delegate from Spain has the floor.

Mr. Manglano Aboín (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President, including for all the efforts that you and your team have been making in recent weeks. I would also like to welcome the Ambassador of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation, Mr. President, joins the delegations that have already expressed their opinion in favour of improving the language of paragraph 23, so that it better reflects the reality of what happened in the room on 5 August and therefore makes it clear that the draft decision was submitted for adoption and there was no consensus. We have heard today some delegations talk about what happened in 2019 and in preceding years, what was included or not included in the reports from those years; and some delegations say that they want a fact-based report, a factual report, and in that sense, I would like to point out that what we have been drafting over these past few weeks is the report of the events that took place this year, not in preceding years, and accordingly, what happened on 5 August is that consensus was not reached in the room.

As the Conference on Disarmament, as a whole, we must be factually correct, and my delegation calls for us to avoid selective drafting – we must not cherry-pick or leave out of the report anything we find inconvenient. We must include what happened. And if there are some delegations that have no objection to expressing themselves in the room, to blocking or opposing the adoption of some decisions and to having their opinions reflected in the verbatim records of the Conference and in the recordings, they should also have no objections to having those opinions or the results of those opinions reflected in the annual report. Hence, my delegation understands that a reflection of the absence of consensus in this regard in the annual report should not be problematic.

I would also like to endorse what the Australian Ambassador has explained very well about the confusing nature of the new wording, although we very much appreciate the effort of the Chilean team to find a balance between the divergent opinions that were heard in the room. That is all from me, Ambassador. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Sir. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. I think I can be brief, as the speakers before me have expressed the same concerns shared by my delegation regarding paragraph 23. Thank you very much for all your efforts, but to be very frank I do

not think, unfortunately, that they are enough. The words “divergent views were expressed” clearly do not reflect what happened during this debate. No consensus was reached. Certain delegations blocked the adoption of this decision. For us it is very clear: if these delegations no longer stand by the positions they took then, then there is a real problem and they should say so. If consensus is reached, then we decide on adoption today. For my part, I see no problem with this. Mr. President, let us adopt it and move on to something else. I do not understand where we are in this debate and I am deeply concerned. I therefore insist, along with other delegations, that this paragraph clearly state that consensus was not reached. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. The delegate of the Russian Federation has the floor.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, we have listened carefully to the explanations given by the secretariat and to the excerpts of the transcripts of the meeting records read out by the secretariat, and we can only express our perplexity about what is happening here in the room.

Frankly, we have listened to a number of delegations present their interpretations of what happened in the two plenary meetings, informal and formal, during discussion of the issue that is reflected in paragraph 23 of the draft report. As can be seen from what the secretariat read, it is true that the Canadian presidency intended to consider a draft decision. At the same time, we remember very well that there was no discussion as such of a document submitted by Canada. There was a debate in which various issues were discussed and various questions were raised about the substance of the initiative in general, but not about the document as such. Moreover, the end of the excerpt that was read out by the secretariat shows that the Canadian presidency did not submit the document to the Conference on Disarmament for approval, so to say that there was or was not consensus, or that some States blocked or did not block its adoption, is simply absurd. Where did this come from? I do not understand.

From the record that the secretariat read out, it is quite clear that the Canadian presidency suggested that a very different issue should be considered – the question of instructing the secretariat to continue working on the basis of the English text and so on. We heard all of that here loud and clear. Where did you get the idea that there was or was not any consensus on the draft document that was submitted by Canada? This is completely out of touch with reality. I do not know where you got that belief, colleagues. In general, your position is simply bewildering. Records exist. You should read them, if you do not believe the secretariat. There was no detailed discussion of a document submitted by Canada. There were statements on various aspects of the initiative to amend the rules of procedure in general, rather than a specific document. Moreover, this document was not presented for approval at the end of the meeting, and the record shows quite clearly that the Canadian presidency did not do so.

Now, as far as paragraph 23 is concerned. We do not quite like it, either, and we have specific suggestions for improving it. In particular, we would like it to be reflected that there were two meetings, both informal and formal. We would therefore like to see the phrase “An informal and formal plenary meetings to consider” included at the beginning of this paragraph, and, with regard to the words “draft decision”, we support the proposal by our Dutch colleague, Ambassador Gabriëlse, to replace “draft decision” with “proposal for a technical update to the Conference’s rules of procedure to reflect the equality” and so on up to the end, to the full stop after “5 August”.

We support those colleagues who disagreed with the second sentence, which read: “Divergent views were expressed on the procedural and operational aspects of the proposal.” Indeed, not only were procedural and operational questions raised, the general expediency of opening the rules of procedure was also addressed. And these issues were also discussed, so we are also in favour of removing this sentence from the text of paragraph 23.

In addition, we would like the next sentence to still reflect the fact that different positions were expressed, so we suggest that “their” is replaced by “various”, so that the sentence would read: “Delegations expressed various positions on the issue, which are duly reflected in the plenary records”, followed by the corresponding document symbol. We believe that, if the paragraph was worded in this way, it would be acceptable to all.

Once again, I repeat that there can be no question at all of speaking of consensus in this case, and we will categorically oppose any mention of consensual or blocking proposals in this paragraph.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Sir. The delegate from Japan has the floor.

Mr. Matsui (Japan): We can support the proposal made by the Ambassador of the Netherlands to mention the presence of the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Sir. Sorry, I forgot to ask whether the delegation of the Russian Federation could send us its proposal in writing. I give the floor to the Russian Federation, which would like to make a clarification.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am sorry, Mr. President, I forgot to mention this at the beginning of my intervention: we will certainly submit all our proposals to the secretariat in writing.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. The delegate of Germany has the floor.

Ms. Mikeska (Germany): Thank you. We, too, see that you have a difficult task here. I will try to be brief also. In our view, what is proposed now is not sufficient. We do not insist on any concrete wording, but we would like the report to reflect that what was discussed was not only procedural and operational aspects but also the question as such – that is, whether or not to adopt the rules of procedure in an inclusive way. From what I just heard from what the secretariat read out, Canada asked whether there was agreement, and I myself remember from the meeting that several delegations underscored that there was no consensus and they used that very word, “consensus”, saying that there was no consensus, so we think that this should be reflected in the report. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I give the floor to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. Regarding paragraphs 23 and 24, I would like to share with you that, without delving into the substance, I would say that no one challenged the equality of men and women. But there are various and different positions on how to reflect this in the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament. That was the fact that was discussed during the two plenary meetings, formal and informal, on 3 and 5 August.

The second fact is that the draft proposal or, as some delegations have said, the draft decision, was not proposed for adoption. We support the proposal by our colleagues from Russia on this issue.

Another point I would like to share with you is that, since in paragraph 4, if I am not mistaken, the name of the President was deleted, it might be good, for the sake of consistency, to delete the name of the President here in these two paragraphs as well. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. We now have the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, thank you very much. At the outset, I would like to welcome the Ambassador of Germany through the Deputy Permanent Representative and through you. He is not here, but welcome to the Ambassador on joining the Conference on Disarmament as the newest member of the Conference family. At the same time, I would also like to put on record our sincere appreciation for the significant contribution made by Ambassador Peter Beerwerth, who has our best wishes for his new endeavours.

Ambassador, let me also thank you for all your efforts and the new language suggestions in the text of the draft report. I have been observing the debate for quite some time now, and particularly on paragraph 23, I would also like to express India's views. In fact, I am getting old, but I am not as old as to have been suffering from amnesia. I was very much there in the room on the days when these debates took place, particularly on the draft

decision or the draft proposal by Ambassador Norton, and if you look at paragraph 17, Mr. President, for a minute, you will see there is no reference to a draft decision there. It is all about proposals. It says, and let me read it out to make it clear to other colleagues, even though they might have copies in front of them: “Throughout the 2021 session, the first three successive Presidents of the Conference conducted intensive consultations with a view to reaching consensus on a programme of work on the basis of the relevant proposals.” The word is “proposals”, not “decisions”. It goes on to say: “Delegations expressed their views on the issue of a programme of work, taking account of relevant proposals and suggestions, which are duly reflected in the plenary records. However, despite these efforts, the Conference did not succeed in reaching consensus on a programme of work in 2021”.

I do not see how paragraph 23 could have different language from that in paragraph 17. There was a proposal by the presidency to amend or make technical updates to the rules of procedure; we all participated in those discussions, and suggestions were made, so it is very similar to paragraph 17. I am not even delving into the substance of the proposal, as it was also called by my colleague from Iran. It is not about substance; it is about the process, it is about procedure, it is about the propriety and the correctness of what should be reflected in the report, and therefore, Mr. President, I would appeal to you to replicate the language from paragraph 17 in paragraph 23. No consensus was reached.

I also remember that there was a proposal made by the Ambassador of the Netherlands to put this proposal or the draft decision to the test, and it was my delegation which requested the President not to put it to the test. To be sure, there was no consensus in all other cases, barring Ambassador Pecsteen de Buytswerve’s presidency, during which the draft decision was actually put to the test. The other two Presidents – the Ambassador of Brazil and the Ambassador of Bulgaria – made a determination that there was no consensus and they said so. I believe that was the case here with Ambassador Norton also. She was very kind and generous not to have put the decision to the test. She said that there was no consensus, that we would keep working to develop a consensus and that was very similar to what the previous presidencies said. Therefore, I would urge that the wording of paragraph 17 be replicated in paragraph 23. I hope that will resolve this problem, at least for the time being, for this year, and then we will deal with it next year, with how to do it better. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the delegate of the Republic of Korea.

Ms. Choi Soonhee (Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor and for this new text in paragraph 23. I will be very brief. I would just like to echo many previous speakers, including the Ambassador of Australia, on these issues.

We do not, frankly, believe this new text reflects properly what actually happened in our discussion. The Conference on Disarmament did not succeed in reaching consensus on the draft decision. We believe this is what actually happened during the discussion and we have particular concerns about the phrase on the procedural and operational aspects, as we do not believe these capture the very important discussion we had during that meeting. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Madam. The Ambassador of Australia is requesting the floor.

Ms. Mansfield (Australia): Thank you very much, Mr. President, and my apologies for coming back on this a second time. Thank you to colleagues. Our recollection of those discussions is that there were quite clear statements by a number of delegations that there was no consensus on the draft decision, and it is that that we feel needs to be reflected. Consensus is clearly both the enormous strength and the crippling weakness of this body, but I do think we need to be accurate in how we reflect what we have been able or not able to achieve in the past months.

I thank my Indian colleague for his sage approach. Indeed, we are looking for this decision and its consideration to be approached in the same way as has been the case with other decisions.

The President: Sorry, Ambassador, could you raise your microphone and repeat the last part.

Ms. Mansfield (Australia): My apologies, all, and to the interpreters. Just to go back and say that I thank colleagues for their comments. Our recollection of what transpired and what was said by members in the room during those discussions does indeed show that there were a number of parties that clearly said there was no consensus with regard to the draft decision. I think the formal record is not yet available. We thank the secretariat for reading the comments from the President, but I think when the formal record of what other speakers said is also made available, you will indeed see that the recollections of some of our other colleagues in the room are accurate. The facts need to be reflected, and we think that the approach to this decision needs to be similar to the approach to other decisions that were considered by this body in the course of the year. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. We have the delegate from the Syrian Arab Republic via video link.

Mr. Ali (Syrian Arab Republic) (*via video link, spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. Before commenting on paragraph 23, I would like to quickly return to paragraph 17 to express my delegation's support for the text you proposed as it is. With regard to paragraph 23, having heard the excerpts read by the secretariat from the digital transcripts of the meeting, our delegation understands that the Canadian document was not formally submitted as a draft decision for adoption by the Conference and that it remained a working paper with a CD/WP symbol, and therefore there is no need for this paragraph to reflect whether or not there was a consensus on the draft decision.

We have additional comments on this paragraph, but we are awaiting instructions from our capital. I support what was said by my colleague from the Iranian delegation about deleting the President's name from this paragraph, for consistency with the rest of the report, as the names of the Presidents are mentioned in the appendix to the report. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Sir. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. Sometimes I think there are alternative realities in this chamber.

I will be brief, as much as I would like to speak more to this. I want to thank the Russian delegation for its proposal, but it is not acceptable to my delegation. I would also like to respond to one other comment that was made by the Russian delegate, who said that the draft decision was not about amending the rules of procedure. On the contrary, that draft decision document was all about amending the rules of procedure – amending them to reflect gender equity in the rules of procedure. To believe something else about that document and the intention behind that document is absurd.

And my last point, as my recollection is the same as the Australian Ambassador's about the fact that a number of States said during plenary discussions that there was no consensus on the draft decision – and certainly if you ask the Canadian President, she will tell you that her intent was to bring this forward for adoption. Now, I do not have the language in front of me, but I did quote some words from what was read by the secretariat, and, again, – I am paraphrasing here – she said that it was her intention to bring it forward “to consider adopting” it.

To me, from my experience in this room, that means you are basically bringing that forward for adoption, and that is what she intended to do. I will let her speak to that issue at another time, because Canada is not present in the room at this moment, but clearly it was understood by all in this room that that was what she was trying to do. There were responses that, in essence, said “no, there is no consensus on this draft decision”, so, again, all we are asking for is a reflection of the fact that there was no consensus on the draft decision. I do not know why that is so hard to obtain in this room. Those who were on the record stating that they could not accept this – why can they not accept this written down in the annual report? I just do not understand it and would welcome further elaboration on this issue. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): My apologies for requesting the floor again, Mr. President, and thank you for allowing me to speak once more. I share the view of my American colleague. I also have the impression that we are living in parallel worlds. To be more precise, I have the impression that some delegations are living in a parallel world outside my own, but this is a minor detail and a question of interpretation.

I would just like respond to the very emotional and very fretful statement by the previous speaker, the representative of the Russian Federation, by saying that I sympathize fully with the Russian delegation. We have all at some point received indefensible instructions from our capital. That's life, that's how it goes, I am sorry to say. I understand the difficulty. I would like to tell the Russian delegation and the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran to report to their capitals exactly what happened here and on 6 August, and seek instructions to help rebuild trust in this forum. Paragraph 23 aside, I believe such instructions erode trust, and we do not need that, quite frankly. To conclude, I heard what our colleague from India has very wisely said. I believe that, by drawing an analogy between paragraphs 17 and 23, there is a way out. My delegation will send you its proposed amendments. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. The Russian Federation has requested the floor.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, please excuse me, but I probably will not be able to fully limit my statement in the way that you asked, by directly discussing the wording. I must simply respond to some of my colleagues' remarks.

First of all, I would like to apologize to the Ambassador of the United States. Clearly, my statement was mistranslated into English for him. I did not mention in my statement that the draft decision does not contain any technical amendments to the rules of procedure. That is not correct. I said that during the debate we had virtually no discussion of this draft decision. That is what I was talking about.

As for the parallel realities of different interpretations, I fully support both my American colleague and my French colleague. Indeed, one gets the impression that everyone has his own truth, his own reality and his own interpretation of what is happening; however, in my statement I referred not to any speculation but to what had been read out by the secretariat. The secretariat quite clearly read an excerpt from the records of the meeting which clearly says that the draft decision was not submitted to States for approval, that at the end of the meeting the presidency proposed considering and approving an entirely different issue – namely, to instruct the secretariat to continue working on the document based on the English text of the draft decision etc.

As for the fact that many delegations said during the discussions that consensus was not building, I really will not argue with that – many delegations talked about that – but it was the assessment of those delegations, and we mentioned the word “consensus”. Indeed, as a result of the discussions, each delegation was able to draw its own conclusion about what was going on, about the situation that had arisen surrounding the proposal. It is therefore inappropriate to base our report on the opinion of individual delegations; we must base it on reality, on fact, and the fact is that the draft decision was not discussed, it was not discussed point by point, and you can pull up all the records – not one State discussed the draft decision point by point. That is my first point.

Secondly, this draft decision was not submitted to States for approval. As for this dual understanding of what Ambassador Norton was saying about the draft decision, as presented by my American colleague, I am quite surprised. English is not my first language, but I clearly understand the difference between “consideration”, “tabling” and “proposing for adoption”. It seems to me that there is a significant difference here between “to consider introducing” and “to propose for adoption”. There is an obvious difference, even for someone who does not speak English, as Ambassador Wood does. So far as our position on this paragraph is concerned, we have already voiced it: this paragraph does indeed require improvement, and our suggestions for doing so will be submitted to the secretariat in writing.

I would also like to respond to the Ambassador of France on his recommendation to inform my capital of what has been going on here. I would like to assure the Ambassador

that Moscow has been informed in detail about the situation at the Conference on Disarmament and about the provocations that have been initiated by certain States.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Sir. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, thank you very much. I think we have had a very interesting debate now. I am taking the floor because I feel a little guilty for having requested the President, Ambassador Norton, not to formally test the decision. The proposal was already on the table. She had circulated her proposal, and I am getting a new lesson in multilateralism today: that every single draft decision has to be first read paragraph by paragraph, tested paragraph by paragraph, and that only then can you come to a determination that there is no consensus.

I have spent most of my career in the multilateral field and I find this a new lesson today. Consensus can only be tested after you formally table a draft decision, do a paragraph-by-paragraph reading? Only then can you come to a conclusion that there is no consensus? I have not seen this ever in my career. I have been in many multilateral bodies where Presidents actually put proposals on the table, they are tested and sometimes they make their own assessments – sometimes informally, sometimes formally. Here, there was a formal plenary meeting on a proposal. Delegations expressed their views on various parts of the proposal, and I think that was enough to make a determination that there was no consensus.

I really feel guilty. I should have allowed the President that day to test the proposal and let those delegations that were saying “no” to the adoption of the draft proposal be exposed. So, I really feel bad today, and I say once again that I feel guilty. I should not have done that. But the past is the past – you cannot go back in time. Perhaps next year we will have learned a lesson. Again, Mr. President, I would insist that we replicate the language from paragraph 17. Otherwise, we will also have paragraph 17 in square brackets. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. It is also clear to my team and me that there is no consensus on the proposal made on paragraph 23, so do not worry. I now give the floor to the delegate from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President, and my apologies for taking the floor again. We support your proposal for paragraph 23. Although we have some observations, we can go along with it, and I can convince my capital. As our Russian colleague said, I assure our French colleagues here that we fully informed our capital. We hope that someday we will inform our capitals, all of us, that the Conference on Disarmament has started substantive work.

Regarding the proposal by the Ambassador of India, Ambassador Sharma, to replicate the wording of paragraph 17 in paragraph 23, I think there is a new sense here, a difference: we spent almost all the first part of the 2021 session discussing the proposal for the programme of work and we delved into the substance of the programme of work, every element, the mandate of the Conference, the subsidiary bodies etc. In that case, then, it makes sense to state that the Conference did not succeed in reaching consensus on the programme of work, but here the situation is a little bit different and needs further consideration. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. We have five more minutes. With that in mind, I now give the floor to the delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Díaz Mendoza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I will be brief. We all have our perception of what happened on 5 and 10 August. Indeed, there was a debate, a discussion of a proposal. There is no doubt about that. What we cannot support are the comments that the Ambassador of Canada intended to present a draft for adoption. We all have intentions, but that is not what happened. A draft was not presented for adoption by the Conference on Disarmament, because if one had been, we would have heard a phrases such as, “May I take it that the Conference is ready to adopt ... ?” That did not happen.

My delegation cannot therefore deduce that a document was presented for adoption. I think we can study the proposal of the Ambassador of India in relation to balancing paragraph 23 with paragraph 17 in order to have the same references or to be correct in terms of the proposals. A draft decision was not submitted for adoption – that is clear. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Excuse me, Ambassador Quintanilla Román; the Ambassador of the Netherlands had requested the floor earlier.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, and I am really happy with the words of our Indian colleague, since I was a bit surprised during the meeting when he blocked my proposal to have the draft decision formally put forward to the Conference on Disarmament. But his motivation was sincere – and I am looking at him and to see whether he is nodding, but I think his motivation was to avoid further aggravating the divisions in the Conference in view of the fact that there was a draft decision on which there was clearly no consensus and that a few States did not want to adopt this decision. It is about how we reach consensus in the Conference.

As the Ambassador of India said to the delegation of Russia – and I would like to echo his words – if we have to take formal steps to see whether we have reached consensus in the Conference, by formally tabling decisions and having them read out paragraph by paragraph, if that is the future, that was not my understanding during this meeting. This meeting was crystal clear. There was a broad consensus on a simple decision to change the language of the rules of procedure that was blocked by a few States. And to avoid exacerbating divisions, the Indian Ambassador said, in reaction to my proposal, that it would be better not to put it forward, so he persuaded the President not to do it.

The other interesting thing he said is that the draft decision is still on the table, and I heard others say that this draft decision that was tabled first by Australia and Canada is still on the table, so I am also looking at incoming presidencies and wondering whether their intention is to keep this draft decision on the table. If we are serious, and those who are blocking it say, “actually, we did not block it, we were in favour of it”, that is good news. If there is a consensus, then we can easily change the rules of procedure, as proposed first by Australia and then by Canada. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. The Ambassador of Cuba has the floor, and he is the last speaker of the morning.

Mr. Quintanilla Román (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Very briefly. In reality, my delegation does not see this matter as particularly challenging. We all have experience in multilateralism, and we all know that draft decisions must be formally recorded in accordance with the regulations of our bodies. Even here in Geneva at the Human Rights Council, if you present a draft resolution, you can debate it and there may not be consensus, but if you do not register it, it is not reflected in the report of the session of the Human Rights Council. For me, then, the situation is very clear, and we should act in accordance with the regulations and the practice that the Conference on Disarmament has followed throughout its history.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. It is clear to me that there is no consensus on this paragraph. Therefore, this presidency will conduct bilateral consultations with those delegations most concerned, trying to find appropriate language that reflects the interests of all parties in order to achieve a consensus. I will do that tomorrow morning and I would be grateful if you could attend these bilateral meetings so that we can draft and present the language to the plenary in due course.

In the afternoon, we will continue with the remaining paragraphs in order to try to finish the discussion of the whole document, especially the paragraphs that have been modified. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.