

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand three hundred and thirty-fifth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 4 February 2015, at 3.05 p.m.

President: Mr. Jorge Lomónaco(Mexico)

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The President: I call to order the 1335th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before we get to the substance of our work this morning, let me first turn to the list of requests from States not members of the Conference to participate in our work during 2015. If approved, they should be able to sit in the room already this morning. I would like to invite the Secretary to read out the name of the countries having submitted requests.

Mr. Fung (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Mr. President, the following non-member State has submitted a request to participate in the work of the Conference: Saudi Arabia.

The President: This request is before you in document CD/WP.583/Add.3, which contains all the requests that the secretariat had received up to yesterday, 3 February 2015, at 4 p.m. Requests from non-member States received after that date will be presented for consideration and a decision at the next plenary meeting. Are there any comments on this request? I see none. May I take it, then, that the Conference decides to invite this State to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, including you, distinguished members of the public sitting in the gallery of the chamber, I would like our meeting to address two issues. First, I would like the Conference to take stock of the developments during the first two weeks of the 2015 session, which, as you will agree, have been full of action, including in particular attempts last week to adopt a programme of work. After that, I would like us to focus on issues pertaining to the rules of procedure of the Conference.

As has been the practice this session, we will allow time for general statements at the end of our meeting.

With regard to last week's developments, as you are aware, at our 1334th plenary meeting, on 29 January 2015, I took action on the adoption of the draft programme of work, registered as document CD/WP.584, after stating relevant elements that should be taken into account in considering it as a package. It is regrettable that, once again, the Conference lost another opportunity to adopt a programme of work that could have enabled an early resumption of substantive negotiations on its agenda items. The continuous inability to adopt a programme of work exemplified at the last plenary meeting should not be labelled as a failure or fault of just one member of the Conference but rather as a collective failure. We all know that, had the debate gone slightly differently, some delegations would have expressed their opposition to some other element or elements in the draft; and many would have preferred to extend the discussion and delay the taking of action. This would not have been a surprise to any of us. The Conference has repeatedly witnessed this kind of situation and practices that not only allow but provide incentives for this to happen. We are all responsible for having built a system that grants members the power to veto a procedural decision and a system that conceives of consensus as a rule rather than as a common aspiration to reach an agreement after a decision-making process to solve differences and minority concerns. Let us not forget that consensus is not unanimity.

We take it as a compliment that so many said we were really close to adopting the draft programme of work proposed by the presidency. We tried hard and perhaps we were close, but the challenge that the contested paragraph in the draft represents cannot be measured in characters. It sits at the heart of the divide that has confronted the Conference for years. It cannot be solved through a simple drafting exercise, as some suggested. By considering the information that you provided to me during the informal meetings held in

December 2014, the general statements that you made not only during the current session but during more than 15 years of plenary meetings, past decisions of the Conference, previous draft programmes of work, the 15 written responses that you provided at my request in the letter which was addressed to you on 15 January 2015 and all the information gathered from informal bilateral exchanges of information, the President received a very clear picture of the positions of member States and groups which showed that most member States are fixated on certain issues and priorities. Moreover, it was evident that some member State views were mutually exclusive. While one country openly stated that it could not accept a programme of work that included negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, other member States clearly expressed that the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices was a priority. Also, a majority of that group expressed that such a treaty had to be negotiated under the mandate that the Conference had already given to the ad hoc committee that would pursue the task. In developing the draft programme of work, the President could not ignore the priorities expressed by a large group of member States who stated that this treaty was a logical step in the quest for a world without nuclear weapons, which should be the end goal of our work at the Conference. That is why the draft submitted for consideration by the Conference included the issues provided by all Conference members and was not crafted around the preference of just one delegation, not even around the preferences of the Mexican delegation. This situation also explains why the presidency developed a draft programme of work that was to be taken as a package, as a compromise agreement among member States. This is also the main reason why changing the substance of the draft by adding or eliminating even one of its elements would modify its essence as a compromise programme of work and why, while recognizing that there could be some editorial changes that might contribute to the accuracy of the text, the presidency did not feel it pertinent to have a drafting exercise on the draft programme of work. We believe that the package presented would have allowed us to fulfil the mandate of the Conference — as expressed at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and by the Conference itself — to be a disarmament negotiating forum. We made explicit the fact that negotiating is not the same as reaching an agreement. An agreement is not the same as an outcome, and reaching an agreement is a privilege of a negotiation: it is not the negotiation itself. We recalled that no mechanism imposes any obligation on sovereign States that are not parties to it. If a country does not agree with or does not find it suitable to join a legally binding instrument out of national interest, it is free to remain outside the instrument and its obligations. We thought that this clarification of the facts would allow us to move forward and break the long-standing impasse of the Conference. The failure to adopt a programme of work under this approach also shows us that some of the rules of procedure have been misinterpreted. As an example, we have seen on different occasions that some delegations have views and have used arguments related to national security to prevent the possibility of conducting negotiations, which is a procedural aspect, rather than in the context of a particular negotiation, which is a substantive aspect.

The draft programme of work that I submitted last week for adoption is now an official document of the Conference. It now belongs to the Conference and it is at your disposal and, particularly, at the disposal of the following Presidents of the Conference. In this regard, I would like to inform you that this morning I met with the other five Presidents for this session. I told them that I had heard loud and clear several voices insisting that we should give the draft programme of work another try. But I also told them that it would be irresponsible for me to try again, as it would be inconsistent with my country's principles and with the spirit of the package — a package — that I presented. More importantly, I honestly believe that it is not possible to resolve the issue of that paragraph in the two weeks that I have left as President, which I had hoped to use to actually implement the draft programme of work. However, that should not prevent

them, any of them — the next Presidents — from trying, if they so decide. And if they do so decide, they will have the wholehearted support of Mexico.

Let me take this opportunity once again to thank those delegations that supported the draft presented by Mexico. We do not regret for a minute having made every effort and having tried a high-stakes and risky strategy. We are proud and sincerely hope to have made a meaningful contribution to the Conference in the hope that it will resume substantive work again.

I will now open the floor to those delegations who would like to participate in this exercise of stocktaking concerning what happened last week.

I recognize South Africa.

Ms. Mancotywa-Kumsha (South Africa): At the outset, my delegation would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and would like to commend you for the significant efforts undertaken in steering our discussions with a view to moving forward on a programme of work. As it was one of the most balanced proposals submitted during the last decade and more, my delegation was ready to join consensus and to contribute to the implementation of the decision.

South Africa was therefore deeply disappointed at the Conference's failure to adopt a draft programme of work that would have enabled the resumption of substantive work early in the 2015 session. Like others, and in accordance with the rules of procedure, we believe that the first part of the session should be devoted to the adoption of a programme of work with a view to commencing negotiations in accordance with the Conference's mandate. The inability of the Conference to agree on a programme of work has illustrated a lack of flexibility on the part of some members who have been holding the international community hostage for many years and preventing progress on the important items on the Conference agenda, particularly nuclear disarmament. This stands in stark contrast to the outcome of the discussions on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, the significant risks posed by the continued possession of nuclear weapons and the urgency of efforts towards eliminating and prohibiting nuclear weapons.

While negotiations are the *raison d'être* of the Conference, South Africa has consistently supported endeavours aimed at revitalizing the Conference's work, thereby paving the way for genuine negotiations that would not simply serve as an illusion of progress. Some of the questions that could be addressed in this regard include the working methods of the Conference. This could include the issue of continuity between Conference presidencies and sessions; whether consensus in the context of the Conference should be interpreted as unanimity, especially in relation to the commencement — as opposed to the conclusion — of negotiations; the relationship between the Conference and the United Nations General Assembly in giving effect to resolutions adopted by the latter; the content and nature of the programme of work and whether extensive mandates on agenda items are necessary; engagement between the Conference and civil society; as well as the expansion of the Conference.

In this regard, South Africa supports the role of the session's six Presidents in improving continuity throughout and between Conference sessions. Additionally, my delegation is of the view that the Conference's rules of procedure, particularly the consensus rule, was never intended as a veto right to prevent the Conference from dealing with any of the issues on its agenda. Rather, the consensus rule should provide all member States with an equal voice and facilitate negotiations through a set of rules that provide the necessary assurances that our collective and national security interests would be adequately promoted and protected.

Furthermore, South Africa has also long supported enhanced engagement between the Conference and civil society, which has a critical role to play in creating public awareness and in providing valuable inputs into our work. We therefore support initiatives such as the Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum, as this could contribute towards enriching our debates on issues related to disarmament.

In conclusion, Mr. President, South Africa remains ready to work with you and all other delegations to overcome the long-standing stalemate in the Conference. The Conference cannot afford to waste yet another year, as this continues to jeopardize its credibility and standing as the world's sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. South Africa believes that it is time to act decisively and salvage the integrity of the Conference. If we continue to fail to meet our mandate, it is only logical that there may well be serious consequences for this body.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for her comments. I now recognize Austria.

Mr. Hajnoczi (Austria): I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to you, Mr. President, for your exemplary commitment and dedicated efforts in producing a robust proposal for a draft programme of work that Austria, of course, fully supported and regrets that it could not be adopted. It has often been discussed in this forum whether it is a lack of political will that prevents the members of the Conference from overcoming the stalemate or if a revision of working methods could also play a role in breaking the deadlock. Austria believes that these issues go hand in hand.

Mr. President, you reminded us last week that in the Conference's earlier days — at a time when the Conference was fully operational and successfully negotiated treaties, and I had the chance at that time to come here from Vienna as a delegate and I remember it quite well — the establishment of a programme of work was a simple procedural task to agree on a timetable of work for the various issues that the member States would negotiate during a one-year session. Differences in views about the nature of the instrument envisaged, as well as the specific scope and other aspects of the task of negotiation, at that time did not, and should not, create artificial stumbling blocks or preconditions for even starting negotiations. In adopting the agenda for the Conference, member States already identify the issues that are to be the subject of negotiations in the Conference. The consensus rule functions well in other forums, but not in the manner in which it is applied here in the Conference.

The rules of procedure require the Conference to review its membership at regular intervals. In our view, it is high time for such a review, which should be comprehensive. We make reference to a general statement delivered by the Czech Republic on this issue at the General Assembly, which was supported by 60 Member States of the United Nations, including Austria. We commend the delegation of the Czech Republic for their tireless efforts in coordinating the informal group of observer States. This group has, for a long time, been actively advocating the work of the Conference, but their proposals for addressing the issue of membership have largely been neglected. It is the view of Austria that a multilateral negotiating forum that tackles issues of collective security, which has an impact on all States by definition, should also provide the possibility for all States to be democratically represented in these negotiations.

Civil society has become an important partner for Governments in multilateral disarmament efforts and, as such, a partner for success. Governments have recognized that the collective security of the people cannot be achieved without the involvement of the people and that exclusion leads to poor results when it comes to implementation. We should also be aware of the rich expertise and wealth of knowledge possessed by civil society stakeholders and academia, which we are neglecting as a possible input to our

work because we fail to reach out to them. In this regard, Austria is grateful to the Acting Secretary-General for convening a Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum in March of this year. We hope this will be a first step towards an opening up of the Conference to civil society.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Austria for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. I thank all those who took the floor for their participation.

Now, turning to issues pertaining to the rules of procedure of the Conference, I would like first to clarify that, by initiating discussion on this topic this afternoon, my intention is to advocate for a positive and constructive interpretation of the rules of procedure in a manner that can serve the purpose for which this Conference was established: negotiating multilateral disarmament agreements. Furthermore, there are aspects of the Conference's work that lie outside of the rules of procedure and together form what we all call "methods of work", which must also be looked at for the sake of strengthening this body. Such aspects and practices include the role of regional groups, of the six Presidents of each session, of the informal group of observer States, the presidency and its duration, and the participation of entities such as civil society organizations whose work is relevant to the work of the Conference, among others.

Many argue that the Conference is influenced by external circumstances and does not operate in a vacuum. That is true. At the same time, however, members of the Conference are not victims of circumstance either. Moreover, we all have a professional and ethical responsibility to resolve our differences in order to fulfil the Conference's mandate.

As the long impasse continues in the Conference, and after our recent experience in focusing efforts on the adoption of a programme of work, it is the opinion of the President that our differences can only be bridged by changing the culture of the Conference — a culture that is home-grown. It was planted and grown in this very hall. It is a culture that has granted a veto power which has impeded relevant outsiders from speaking before it. It is a culture that has tied the hands of the Conference's Presidents in a fashion that is not consistent with multilateral practice in the United Nations system or other modern multilateral mechanisms. It is a culture that has created the dual-track approach to disguise the fact that it has failed to fulfil its mandate and *raison d'être* year after year. It is a culture that considers it acceptable and natural to spend a whole year negotiating a programme of work without ever adopting it, only to start the same cycle all over again the next calendar year. It is a culture of non-existent diplomacy, as it does not allow diplomats to use their skills in disarmament negotiations.

During this presidency's efforts to adopt a programme of work, and as you yourselves heard at the plenary meetings, many delegations expressed their interest in exploring ways to improve the manner in which we conduct our work in the Conference. Different aspects and proposals have been voiced. In response to those many calls, during the time left under my presidency I will try to address some of the issues that have been identified and which might contribute to the commencement of substantive work in the Conference. Today, I would like to focus on one of the various issues that delegations asked me to address: civil society participation.

Many delegations have referred to the benefits of allowing civil society participation because of its fundamental contribution in other disarmament and arms control forums. The possibility to do so is in our hands: a decision by the Conference is enough to make it so.

At this time, I kindly request the secretariat to distribute the draft proposal of the President on civil society participation at the Conference on Disarmament, contained in document CD/WP.585, to the membership and observer States for consideration.

I give the floor to the secretariat.

Mr. Fung (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): I simply wish to indicate, Mr. President, that copies of document CD/WP.585 in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish are available in the corner of the room.

The President: I will now suspend the meeting for 20 minutes to allow you time to read the draft proposal by the President on civil society participation so that, when we resume the plenary meeting, you may provide me with some preliminary comments, bearing in mind that you will require consultation with your capitals before giving any official comment in this regard. The meeting is suspended for 20 minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 3.40 p.m. and resumed at 4 p.m.

The President: The meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, you have had time to familiarize yourselves with the draft decision and now I would like to invite some preliminary comments from members and observers. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this time? I recognize the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. Motta Pinto Coelho (Brazil): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative to present this proposal. We, in Brazil, think that the Conference on Disarmament should be more active in engaging civil society in its discussions and deliberations.

I asked for the floor, however, to request a clarification so that I can inform my capital about this proposal. It has to do with paragraphs 2 and 3. I do not know if the paper is complete without paragraph 3, or is that an addition to what is already contained in paragraph 2, since paragraph 2 indicates that — I am talking about operative paragraph 2 — civil society may participate in the discussions. So, I do not see if paragraph 3 is only a reiteration of paragraph 2.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Brazil and will respond in a moment. I recognize the Ambassador of Finland.

Ms. Kairamo (Finland): We thank you very much, Mr. President, for your proposal, which we will of course study with care. It goes without saying that our initial reaction is positive, but we will have to check of course with our capital.

I, too, have a question. It relates to the same paragraph referred to by my colleague from Brazil. How do you interpret paragraph 3 and the language “Conference will invite”? If you can provide some feedback and the thinking behind it, it would be helpful for our reflection.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Finland and now give the floor to Switzerland.

Mr. Masmejean (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): As we have mentioned on other occasions, Mr. President, we believe that it is particularly important at this juncture for the Conference to reflect on how it operates. You yourself, as well as other delegations here today, have highlighted the reasons why we must take this step.

The issue of civil society participation in the work of the Conference is a key part of this necessary introspection. Two features that distinguish the Conference are the long stalemate that has beset its work and the very rigid restrictions it places on participation by civil society. This approach runs entirely counter to the one generally pursued in most other multilateral forums.

We therefore express our appreciation for the draft that you have put forward for our consideration. Making it possible for members of civil society — whether they be representatives of academia, research institutions or NGOs working in the sphere of disarmament and security — to participate actively in our work and to make comments or proposals is an important step that the Conference has a responsibility to take.

We will give all due consideration to your proposal and will share with you any specific comments we may have, but in principle we support the general thrust of your draft.

The President: I thank the representative of Switzerland.

I have two or three more requests for the time being, but I think it is a good time to respond to the questions put forward by Brazil and Finland.

In drafting this proposal, we were inspired by the rules of procedure of the Conference, so the language of paragraph 2 is contained in rule 33 of the rules of procedure. The idea is to grant the same right to civil society with the same wording and language as for observer States. So, paragraph 2 mirrors — or uses the same language and grants the same rights as — rule 33 for member States, and paragraph 3 of the draft proposal uses the same language and grants the same rights as those granted in rule 34 to observer States. In essence, what we are proposing is to grant the same speaking rights and the same rights to submit documents as we have granted, through the rules of procedure, to observer States, and we use the same language in order to follow a safe practice. Approved language is a lot easier to adopt than new language. That is the reason for these two paragraphs.

(spoke in Spanish)

I now give the floor to the delegation of Ecuador.

Mr. Avilés (Ecuador) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Mr. President, the delegation of Ecuador wishes to reiterate its appreciation for all the work done by you and your team to advance the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Following your example, we must persevere with a spirit of creativity and flexibility in our collective endeavour to agree on a programme of work that will make it possible for the Conference to get back to its work of negotiating multilateral instruments dealing with the issues on its agenda.

In response to your request for delegations to address other topics relating to the Conference's rules of procedure, I would like to refer briefly to the expansion of the membership of the Conference, the interaction between civil society and the Conference, and the Conference's methods of work. Ecuador has expressed its views on these issues at previous meetings, and those views remain unchanged.

Regarding expansion of the Conference's membership, Ecuador has long called for increased democratization of international bodies, greater transparency and universality in the understanding that solutions to contemporary international problems must emerge from a collective effort and responsibility of all the States that make up the international community. Collective efforts are especially crucial for peace, security and nuclear disarmament, as what we are talking about here is preventing a nuclear detonation and, indeed, humanity's very survival. For these reasons, Ecuador is in favour of expanding the membership of the Conference without further delay.

Ecuador also supports greater interaction between the Conference and civil society, and in this regard it welcomes and supports the valuable initiative put forward by the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Møller, to hold a Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum on 19 March of this year.

Nuclear disarmament is an issue of paramount importance and concern to Governments, the United Nations system and international organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, academia, research centres and civil society NGOs that can and should contribute their knowledge, experience and expertise to the work of the Conference with a view to creating a safer world free from nuclear weapons.

My delegation thus supports in principle the document that you have put forward this afternoon on the active participation of civil society in the work of the Conference.

The issue of the Conference's methods of work is less straightforward. Nevertheless, Ecuador is in favour of holding frank and open discussions on this matter to determine whether changes could be introduced that would enhance how the Conference operates. Even though previous multilateral instruments, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, were concluded using the same methods of work as those currently followed in the Conference, we believe that the long period of deadlock, which has lasted for more than 18 years now, obliges States parties to seek innovative alternatives to break through this impasse once and for all. We should reflect in earnest on whether the current structure — whereby each year the Conference is presided over by six different Presidents for four-week terms — is desirable and effective, or whether the Presidents need more time to carry out their work. One option could be to have three Presidents a year rather than six, with each one presiding over one part of the Conference's annual session.

The rule of consensus, in the view of Ecuador, should not be considered sacrosanct or inviolable. Of course, decisions arrived at by consensus enjoy greater buy-in and have better chances of being implemented; however, in a multilateral body that claims to be democratic, solid majorities should have the power to take decisions.

Mr. President, these are some initial thoughts that my delegation would like to put forward as our contribution to the collective effort that has brought us all here today. Ecuador stands ready to contribute constructively and join the consensus around these important issues.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Ecuador for his statement.

(*spoke in English*)

Your ideas should serve as food for thought for our future discussions on these issues.

Now, I would like to give the floor to the Ambassador of New Zealand.

Ms. Higgie (New Zealand): New Zealand applauds the sentiment behind your proposal in document CD/WP.585, Mr. President, and we certainly applaud your efforts to provide better access for NGOs and greater openness to the work in our body. We support, therefore, strongly the intention behind your proposal.

Following on from the question put to us all by Brazil and Finland, I had taken it that the reference in paragraph 2 to the subject matter of negotiations meant that the access regime established in paragraph 2 applies in the context of any subject that is being negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament and that paragraph 3 applied to the situation — like for the last 18 years — when we are not negotiating something. Is that the construct that you are setting up, or am I being too analytical and global? In any event, we applaud your intention. We think the language is going to have to be ruminated on a little and we look forward to considering it over the coming days.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of New Zealand.

There is nothing too complicated behind this proposal in terms of language. In fact, it is meant to be the other way around. Allow me to read out rule 33 of the rules of procedure, which is in the chapter "Participation by States not members of the Conference". Rule 33 reads: "Interested States not members of the Conference may submit to the Conference written proposals or working documents on measures of disarmament that are the subject of negotiation in the Conference and may participate in the discussion of the subject matter of such proposals or working documents." If you notice, we have used that exact language and substituted "States not members of the Conference" with "civil society representatives". Why rule 33 was drafted in such a fashion escapes my understanding. It certainly belongs to a time when the Conference used to work and there was a distinction between negotiation and discussion. In recent times, we fortunately have taken the view to simply allow observer States to speak and present documents. That has been the interpretation for many years of what rules 33 and 34 mean. The proposal, in other words, is that whatever we have granted to observer States should be granted to civil society, and the vehicle for doing that is by using the same language that is already enshrined in the rules of procedure. Now, if that creates confusion, I am open to finding other ways to simplify. I just thought that following the old practice that diplomats like using already approved language would facilitate our work. If it is having the opposite effect, I am open to hearing your views on that. Again, the intention is to grant exactly the same rights to civil society representatives. The same example goes for rule 34 vis-à-vis paragraph 3 of our draft. We have only substituted the words "States not members of the Conference" with "civil society representatives". Again, the idea is to grant the same rights and the vehicle is to use approved language, language that is enshrined in the rules of procedure.

Algeria has the floor.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, the delegation of Algeria would like to reiterate its appreciation for your efforts to get the Conference on Disarmament back to its substantive work. I would also like to recall my country's views on contributions by civil society to our discussions. Algeria has always been mindful of the commitment and efforts of civil society — sometimes to a more ambitious degree than States — to create a world free of nuclear weapons. It has always taken care to ensure that such participation occurs through appropriate channels in a way that fosters, to the extent possible, coordination or interaction with States so that the views of civil society may be made known during negotiations and consultations on nuclear disarmament. This way of involving civil society is an appropriate one and should be followed in order to achieve consensus among States parties.

Concerning the text we have just received, the Permanent Mission of Algeria cannot of course take a decision itself on such an important issue and must send it to the capital for review and comment.

I would just like to request clarification, Mr. President, in the light of your statement that paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of the draft decision are taken almost verbatim from paragraphs 32, 33 and 34 of the rules of procedure, with a few minor changes. Are we to understand that your draft decision is a draft amendment to the rules of procedure set out in document CD/8/Rev.9?

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria. No, my proposal is not to amend any previous document, but rather to adopt a new, self-standing decision on civil society participation.

I now recognize Belarus.

Mr. Grinevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, we have a few questions for you, as well as some comments.

Question 1: will this document remain open for consultation and discussion, or do you intend to give delegations a time frame — 48 hours, 100 hours — to look at it before putting it up for consideration?

Question 2: if the document is to remain open, then we have a few comments. On operative paragraph 1, we would like to know why you are allowing for the possibility of civil society participation specifically only for those organizations registered with the United Nations Economic and Social Council?

We would like to make a preliminary comment on this. While there are many NGOs registered with the Council, as a rule these are organizations that are in a position to contribute to the Council's work. I have participated in Council meetings on several occasions and the situation with regard to registration was quite complicated. I remember that representatives of some NGOs representing the rights of sexual minorities were not always able to easily obtain the right to vote, which is in fact the right to contribute to the Council's work since that depends on voting.

In this regard, it might be prudent to look at the rules of procedure of other disarmament bodies, such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Meetings of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, to ensure that representatives of competent bodies with relevant expertise that have a contribution to make to the Conference on Disarmament are able to participate.

Switzerland has already suggested stipulating that these can be representatives of national or international research institutes or centres specializing in issues that are being addressed in the Conference and NGOs that deal with disarmament and security-related issues. That would make everything clear. Otherwise, a representative of any organization registered with the Economic and Social Council could turn up here, take a seat, put his or her hand up and say, "Hello, I'm here." But that would not be in the interests of the Conference: in fact, quite the contrary — it would make the work of the Conference more cumbersome.

We also, along with the delegations of Brazil, Finland and Algeria, have questions with regard to paragraphs 2 and 3. There is a key word missing from the second paragraph, I believe. Here we need to clearly stipulate that this is about granting observer status to representatives of civil society.

These are our preliminary comments for now, and we will of course send the document to our capital for consideration. However, our delegation considers that the main task of this Conference is to adopt the programme of work. At this stage, it might not be worth getting distracted by administrative issues.

The President: I thank the delegate of Belarus for his comments. Let me start with the last comment. I hear what you are saying, but you have been here in this room and you have heard many others say that they consider it a priority to discuss civil society participation. So, I am following the call of the room. I respect your view, but the majority in this room has called for us to consider this question.

I will now go back to the first point you made and I thank you for your question, because it gives me the possibility to clarify and to make a distinction. Unlike the draft programme of work, this is not a package. This is a proposal that can benefit from input and it is indeed subject to consultations. If you asked me, I would probably suggest — because of the very argument you used, that is, that we should not get distracted — that we not spend too much time on it. Since it is a pretty straightforward question, let us try to finalize it one way or the other soon. Ideally, using the very same logic, I would like to

see if we can take action on it this coming Tuesday. But if that is not possible and you want to open the text, so be it, because this is not a package.

One area in which you suggested that we may want to improve the text is by taking a more liberal approach. I have to confess that I have taken a rather conservative approach against my instincts. I am all for transparency and openness, and I would open this hall to the world if I could, just to be clear. I thought, however, that it would be easier to take a slightly conservative approach. There will be more of a possibility of avoiding objections by sticking to the conservative approach that we ourselves follow at the United Nations.

If you want to amend it to take a different approach to be more liberal, I am with you, but let us see what others think. Again, I wish to clarify that my conservative approach is based solely on my impression that it will be more likely to get your support, or to rephrase, more likely to avoid your objections by taking a conservative approach.

The proposal does not mean to grant the status of observer — as we interpret and define it — to civil society participation. Allow me to stress this. The proposal is meant to grant the same rights to civil society representatives as observer States have. It is not for them to become observers but to grant them the same rights.

I think I have responded to your questions.

(spoke in Spanish)

I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Ms. Pérez Álvarez (Cuba) *(spoke in Spanish)*: As this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor at this session, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your efforts to move the Conference on Disarmament forward with a view to the adoption of a programme of work, which is the shared goal of everyone in this forum.

With regard to the proposal that you have just circulated today for the first time, we will be sending it to our capital and, of course, we will need to analyse it paragraph by paragraph. We found the comments made by several delegations about placing States and civil society on the same level very interesting. I understand that your intention is to put forward an open proposal, one that is not set in stone but instead subject to amendment. To be honest, I do not know if copying and pasting from the rules of procedure is the best way to go about it, as perhaps we cannot feasibly draw a parallel between the rules of procedure and the text of the proposal, in the sense that States and civil society organizations are not the same. If the idea is to grant the same rights to observer States and to civil society, I think that might not be possible because, in the United Nations and in international forums, a State is a State and an NGO is an NGO. We would need to study and analyse the issue a bit further to see first of all what it is we are granting to civil society organizations.

The other issue is the matter of non-objection. Normally, when we engage in a multilateral exercise, there is almost always a procedure in place for States to establish guidelines for deciding who will participate and how they will participate in a given meeting. If such a mechanism does not already exist within the Conference, then it would need to be discussed and approved. For the Economic and Social Council, there is a clear rule, a resolution that establishes the procedure for the participation of NGOs that hold consultative status with the Council (Council resolution 1996/31).

The representative of Belarus just raised an important point concerning the difference between the Economic and Social Council, where a variety of subjects are discussed, and the negotiation of a disarmament treaty. As I understand it, the idea is for civil society organizations to contribute in some way to the negotiations to be held within the Conference and also to contribute in some way to our discussions here. My initial

impression is that we need to study the text further and that it will probably need to be amended. We should also consider whether we, as a review conference, want to establish a mechanism specific to the Conference, a procedure to be followed within the Conference to regulate what type of civil society organizations will contribute and how they will do so. We should see, for example, whether there is already a roster or some kind of list of the organizations that have traditionally contributed over the years in all disarmament forums — a directory of sorts of those that typically participate. I also heard a reference to participation by representatives of well-known institutes and research centres. We have not yet received any instructions from our capital regarding the civil society forum to be held in March, but this document would constitute a more long-term proposal, one that is more forward-looking and, as such, would require in-depth study. For instance, we would need to decide if we really want to give equal treatment to observer States and civil society organizations; if we want to grant permanent seats to members of civil society or not; if we want them to hold the same status in a negotiation or in a treaty or not; if we want them to come to speak about specific agenda items or if we want them to have a permanent presence at all plenary meetings; if we want participation to be restricted to organizations registered with the Economic and Social Council or not; and if we want to establish our own mechanism or procedure for our own disarmament NGOs.

I apologize for taking the floor for so long, but I think that in principle it is worth studying the proposal. In any case, if we are going to establish such a procedure within the Conference then it should be a mechanism, a procedure that is designed correctly, that we have sufficient time to discuss and consider, including through informal negotiations and not necessarily in an official setting such as this meeting today.

I thank you for your overall efforts to advance the work of the Conference.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Cuba for that statement. (*spoke in English*)

Your questions are very pertinent, and I hope we can respond to them with either a “yes” or a “no”. They should be simple. It will be interesting to see where we stand on all these questions. This is meant to force us to take a stand on civil society. I think that civil membership should take a stand. Are we for open and transparent proceedings or not? I think that is the overarching question.

Ireland, you have the floor.

Mr. Jackson (Ireland): The range of views that have already been expressed, Mr. President, and the questions posed by other colleagues will certainly help inform the instructions that I will seek from my own capital.

Just by way of a preliminary reaction, we certainly fully share the intent behind this resolution. It fully chimes with what we have said on many occasions, that is, that we believe we should benefit from the expertise of civil society. The variety of questions we have heard today certainly makes us optimistic that that is a view shared all around this chamber. We look forward to coming back to this, as you have indicated, I believe, next Tuesday. The questions we have already heard and the answers you have provided and interpretations from colleagues are proving most useful and they will be sent back to our capital for instructions.

The President: I thank the representative of Ireland for his statement. (*spoke in Spanish*)

I recognize the representative of Chile.

Mr. Guzmán (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to back up just a bit to express once again my country's disappointment that the Mexican presidency's efforts did not culminate in the outcome we had hoped for. We are well aware that your country, Mr. President, believes wholeheartedly in disarmament as a means of creating a safer world, and both our countries, Chile and Mexico, have worked together on many initiatives to that end. My capital was ready to work on all necessary fronts in order for your programme of work to be adopted.

With regard to the proposal that you have just put before us, we continue to hope that the Conference on Disarmament will take action. At the same time, we know full well that the Conference will not be revived by itself; the solution will not come from within. It is time to make a drastic change in course, perhaps along the lines of the changes you were trying to introduce. Perhaps only the General Assembly, meeting in a new special session devoted to disarmament, is capable of reviving this Conference by moving it beyond cold war mindsets and providing a multilateral, twenty-first century perspective that is both democratic and inclusive. We believe that the proposal you have just made strengthens that inclusiveness. Chile is ready to consider and push forward any course of action that would revive the Conference, since it has unfortunately become clear that, this year yet again, the Conference will not meet the expectations of civil society and the General Assembly.

You may count on my country's support for your proposal on the participation of civil society; and the more liberal and inclusive it is, the better. At the same time, I would like to touch on the points raised by the representative of Cuba. I find them to be quite reasonable and worthy of consideration. And, from my personal viewpoint, I would like to understand why we should not prioritize increasing the number of member States over including civil society. My country believes wholeheartedly in the participation of civil society in this and all other forums, but we would also like to see sitting here in our midst those States that are relegated to the back of the room.

In closing, allow me to thank you again for your efforts and those of your excellent diplomatic team.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Chile.

(*spoke in English*)

Just to address your last comment, allow me to say we still have one more week to go.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Mr. President, for another excellent draft decision, which has elicited an interactive, although complex, reaction. For my part, once again I am not going to be very original: I will say that we also need to consult with our capital, but on a preliminary note I would like to request some clarification, taking into account the views expressed by some other speakers.

Valid points have been made by those who support the decision and by those who have questions. But there is, in fact, only one issue here. The Economic and Social Council — to the best of my knowledge, although I am someone who knows more about disarmament than economic and social issues — does not just register organizations with expertise in the field of disarmament. I would like to know how many NGOs are registered with the Council and how many of them are related to disarmament, and more specifically, to the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

Second, you mentioned that your draft is based on the rules of procedure of the Conference. Here, it seems to me, well-founded doubts have been expressed as to whether

there is merit in comparing States with NGOs, which at most represent only a specific group or sector of society and which, unlike Governments, do not have any obligations to the citizens of countries. While NGOs may have a responsibility to the people they represent, the only body that answers to everyone in a country is the Government. We all know this very well. It seems to me that this should also be taken into account when we take decisions that affect fundamental aspects of security and where mistakes can cost everybody dearly, particularly at the current juncture.

My third question is more of a technical nature and relates to legal processes. Colleagues have already asked questions with regard to the second and third paragraphs, but I have a question with regard to paragraph 42, in section XII of the rules of procedure. As far as I understand, you are saying that the decision does not affect legal processes and is what is known in English as a “stand-alone” decision. If that is the case, I have the following question: what about rule 42? Will there not be a contradiction? And which should take precedence, the corresponding paragraph in the rules of procedure or the draft decision now before the Conference? I am not saying that this needs to be answered now, particularly since several delegations have spoken about the possibility of a further meeting or informal consultations. If this means that your draft changes something previously agreed, even if only implicitly, in the rules of procedure, then I need to inform my capital about this. You understand the nuance here — this may be a technical issue, but it is an extremely important one.

The last question concerns consistency in our activities and the direction of our work. Of course there are situations in which continuity is nothing but a source of irritation and dissatisfaction: 18 years without real substantive discussion, for example. But if we want to move forward consistently, we need to be consistent in the decisions we take. Last year, at the initiative of the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference, a decision was taken to hold an informal Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum, which has now been postponed until 19 March. Can you tell us what format this event will take? We have already reported to our capitals, and the secretariat, or to be precise the Acting Secretary-General, has sent a letter to the Permanent Representatives to the Conference, inviting them to attend the event. So my question is: by whose rules are we actually going to play?

The President: Allow me to address two of the questions that you put forward. Rule 42 does not conflict with the draft proposal, because it is about communications and how you handle and keep communications. That can be resolved, however, with an additional paragraph to the effect that all of the foregoing is notwithstanding the rules of procedure. There is a pretty straightforward technique to resolve that issue.

As to the event being organized by the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, or — better said — by the Acting Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, it is being organized under his own responsibility and it is separate from whatever happens in the Conference, which, by the way, both Mexico and myself fully support. So, there is no contradiction or inconsistency. One is a forum that we are extremely supportive of and the other is something different that may be what we decide or not vis-à-vis civil society participation.

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

Mr. Buck (United States of America): The United States, of course, conducts a robust dialogue with civil society and we continue that as a matter of national policy and appreciate very much the inputs of civil society colleagues in this domain. I just have, in preparation for sending this proposal back to my capital for review, a couple more questions that are specific to the rules of procedure, just to understand — I think I

understand the intent — but just to make sure that the intent is reflected in the draft document.

You mentioned rules 33 and 34 as being the basis of the document in trying to establish a sort of parallelism between civil society representatives and what we refer to in lay terms here as observer State representatives or non-member State participants.

One question I had is on rule 34. There is a reference specifically in the latter part of the paragraph that says: “Having considered such a request the Conference will, through its President, transmit an invitation to that effect to the State or States concerned.” Now, in draft operative paragraph 3 there is a reference to civil society representatives being invited along the lines, I think, of the first part of paragraph 34 but, when paragraph 34 continues, it suggests that a decision is still subsequently to be made. I was not sure how you see the alignment there, because if you read operative paragraph 3 as it stands, there is an automaticity that is implied. That would be one question.

Another question is on rule 35, which relates to rules 33 and 34. Rule 35 states: “The Conference may also decide to invite the States referred to in rules 33 and 34 to participate in informal meetings and in meetings of its subsidiary bodies, in which case the procedure of rule 34 is applicable.” So, at least for non-member State participants, there is this sort of qualifier. We know and they can certainly tell us and give us examples of circumstances where we have gone into informal plenary or there have been informal subsidiary meetings where they have not always been invited to participate: in some cases they have and in some they have not. I would appreciate, Mr. President, your thoughts and perspectives on how the draft decision relates to that question. Would it envision civil society participation in all meetings, regardless of whether they are informal or formal, without a subsequent decision of the body, as put by the President?

My last question is similar to some questions that have been put here before but, and I do not want to be pedantic about it, I just want to put it out there. This issue of the Economic and Social Council registries versus the definition of civil society in operative paragraph 3: are those the same definitions that you would intend to use there?

The President: I thank the representative of the United States of America. I will come back to the question of the definition of “civil society”, which has been raised in many statements and it certainly seems that we need to address it in one way or another.

As to the first part of your comment, you are absolutely right. You have spotted the main difference between our draft and the approved language. It was done on purpose, but if it is not something that members can live with, then we can certainly — if the technique that we have used is acceptable — we can avoid any cherry-picking that might make you uncomfortable.

I acknowledge the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ahn Young-jip (Republic of Korea): I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation for your ambitious and bold approach to adopt a programme of work last week, Mr. President, and to submit some constructive suggestions on the working methods.

I fully understand the spirit and reasoning behind the need for more active engagement between civil society and the Conference on Disarmament, and my delegation in fact supports more active engagement in this regard. We will communicate with our Government to receive their instructions regarding your new proposal. Our preliminary comment after reading your draft is that some phrasings may give the impression that there will be free and full access of civil society to the Conference. We should be cautious in allowing that. As many other delegations have mentioned, this forum is a little different from other United Nations forums, such as the Economic and

Social Council, because it essentially deals with very sensitive national security issues. On that understanding, instead of allowing civil society representatives full and free access upon their request to the Conference, it would be more reasonable to allow them access on the basis of need. In other words, if the Conference agrees that there is a need for civil society participation, we can decide to grant that.

Another question regards a procedural matter. Mr. President, you requested that this decision should be made by next week, but should we decide so quickly? With the first Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum coming up in March, our discussions there may yield some kind of lessons learned and understandings. Our decision should perhaps reflect the outcome of our discussions at the forum, at which point we could take a more reasoned decision.

The President: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement.

Is there any delegation wishing to take the floor?

(spoke in Spanish)

The delegation of Cuba has the floor.

Ms. Pérez Álvarez (Cuba) *(spoke in Spanish)*: I would just like to request a clarification. This is an official meeting for which I imagine records and also a press release will be produced. Will there be a press release? I ask this because, given the sensitive nature of this issue, all countries are committed to and recognize the valuable contributions made by many NGOs worldwide that closely follow the issue of nuclear disarmament. For us in particular, the work carried out in this field is very important, but I would like to point out that any of the views expressed by the various representatives at this meeting today might be interpreted or understood in a way that could be rather unfortunate, because the whole idea is really to have contributions from civil society. I bring this up because it seems that, at some point in the past, there was a press release issued in which the views reflected were not the views actually held. For this reason, I would prefer that this meeting be considered as a kind of “informal informal” meeting, although it was indeed formal. In any event, I am not sure that it would be wise to issue a press release at this juncture, as the views expressed by the delegations are only preliminary reactions. I think that we should perhaps revisit this issue together, and also with you, in an informal setting.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I thank the delegation of Cuba for that statement.

(spoke in English)

Let me be clear. The status of this meeting is not in question. This is a formal plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and that is not subject to discussion. It was convened as such, and we all agreed to participate in that fashion. The President is not responsible for any press release that may have been issued, in the past or in the future. That is something that falls to the Office for Disarmament Affairs, I believe. I am not sure. I will ask the secretariat to clarify. That does not fall within my purview of responsibilities, so I will offer the floor to the secretariat.

Mr. Fung (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Mr. President, all plenary meetings of the Conference on Disarmament have official records. The Information Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva issues press releases that capture the discussions of these meetings to the best of their ability. We also have in the room members of the public, including members of civil society, who issue reports of their own on the proceedings of Conference plenary meetings.

The President: I thank the secretariat for that clarification.

If there is no other request for the floor, I would like to sum up this discussion. Clearly, there are a number of questions on the draft proposal, the main one having to do with — and I will take some liberties in using the expression — the definition of the civil society representatives that we would allow to participate. I think that pertains to paragraph 1. There were some questions as to whether using the Economic and Social Council definition would resolve the matter. There were some proposals made that we should have our own definition of what “civil society representative” means and list the different categories that we might want to include or not. We settled on the Council definition, again as a conservative approach but also to use a well-established reference in order to avoid negotiating a definition of civil society in the context of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs has a register of civil society organizations, so that is one option we might resort to. It is a list of organizations that are relevant to disarmament work. We could also tap into disarmament civil society organizations registered with the Economic and Social Council or registered with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, so there is some exploring to be done. I would personally prefer to stick to some sort of outside reference that would facilitate matters and allow us to avoid what could be a very lengthy discussion or negotiation on the scope. We will try to work out something, taking into consideration your views.

I believe that we can try for a little bit longer to follow the approach of using agreed language, but it is also clear that the agreed language, even if we follow that approach, requires some improvement. One reason would be in order to avoid any inconsistency with the rules of procedure, as the Russian Federation pointed out, inasmuch as the draft would be a self-standing decision if approved. So, we need to avoid any inconsistency. That is one point.

The United States of America picked up on another problem that we need to address and which might also respond to concerns of members about granting privileges to civil society equivalent to those of observer States.

We will work out some amendments and improvements on the basis of the discussions and circulate those amendments among the membership.

On the question of informal consultations, for me these are the consultations. This is an issue that must be discussed in plenary, unless you object to discussing it in plenary. I believe that this is an issue of importance that has to be discussed in plenary.

I see that we might not be able to finalize this issue under my presidency, but we would like to make as much progress as possible and then leave it to the following Presidents to follow up as they see fit.

I recognize the delegate from Belarus.

Mr. Grinevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Our delegation remains very flexible with regard to the participation of representatives of civil society in the work of the Conference on Disarmament, provided they have specific expertise relevant to the work of the Conference. Last year, if you recall, the representative of Belarus, as a discussion coordinator on paragraphs 5, 6 and 7, invited representatives of two NGOs to make contributions. From our discussion today, it would appear that the document you have proposed cannot be agreed upon by next Tuesday.

I would, in any case, like to hear how our work will be structured, what we should report to our capitals as the discussion progresses, and whether you intend to take a decision on the proposed document next Tuesday, or whether we will hold some sort of additional meeting, be it formal or informal. I am just seeking some clarity on what my delegation should report back to our capital and what your plans are. What will happen

next week? Today, the coordinators were told that the secretariat would be issuing a circular letter tomorrow. Will that be about this, or about something else? Some clarity on these matters would be appreciated.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus. As I tried to explain earlier, my reading of the room is that the draft requires some improvements. I referred to those areas that need to be improved. I highlighted the question of what NGOs we are talking about. I also said that, if you agree to follow the approach of using agreed language, and even if we do so, there needs to be some improvements made to that technique, so to speak. So, the presidency will work on modifications to this draft and we will circulate these modifications as soon as they are ready. That is with regard to the question of civil society participation.

I agree with you: I do not believe we will be ready to take action on Tuesday, given the fact that more work needs to be done. We will clearly have to return to this issue on Tuesday, in addition to the other activities and subjects that will be announced as per our practice at the end of the week, bearing in mind that last Friday and the Friday before we announced the subjects that would be before each plenary meeting.

Summing up on the question of civil society participation, we will circulate a modified version through the secretariat as soon as one is ready. We will have to come back to it in the plenary on Tuesday because clearly it is not ready for me to try to take action on it.

With that, distinguished colleagues, I thank you very much for your input and your reactions. I know that I have put you in a hard spot, forcing you to react to something that has just been circulated, but I believe it is a good technique to make you respond and try to make progress. Sometimes it works and sometimes it does not. Today the message is clear: we need more time on this, but I want to thank you. Your input is extremely valuable in trying to find an acceptable solution on civil society participation.

I would like now to open the floor to members who have asked to take the floor to make statements. I first acknowledge Ambassador Wu of China.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, Mr. President, I offer you my congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and I also wish to express appreciation for your efforts aimed at reaching agreement on a programme of work for the Conference. We look forward to you and the other Presidents continuing broad consultations with all parties so that the Conference might soon reach a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that is acceptable to all parties and begin substantive work without further delay.

My term here in Geneva as Ambassador for Disarmament is drawing to a close, following which I will return to China. It is the second time in my diplomatic career that I have served here in this capacity. In the 1990s, I had the honour to participate in the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a member of the Chinese delegation. Over the past three-odd years, I have worked with my colleagues to explore possible approaches to breaking the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of my views and understandings regarding the work of the Conference.

The Conference on Disarmament is the most appropriate forum of the international community for multilateral disarmament negotiations. The Conference and its predecessors have concluded many treaties, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which constitute the pillars of the multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation systems. The Conference has played an indispensable role in

maintaining global peace and security and enhancing mutual trust among States. Despite facing difficulties, the Conference has the membership base, rich experience and enormous potential for negotiating and concluding treaties on arms control and disarmament.

The root causes of the deadlock in the Conference must be addressed. The impasse faced by the multilateral disarmament mechanism is attributable first and foremost to political factors, rather than to the mechanism itself or its rules of procedure. The overall international security situation is evolving in a complex and profound way and is an important external factor affecting progress in the work of the Conference. Finding the appropriate remedy to the situation is the only way to overcome the impasse.

Abandoning the Conference is not the right path to a solution. Starting anew and negotiating core issues outside the Conference would not guarantee the participation of all relevant key States and would not ensure the universality and effectiveness of future results. It also would not give effect to the important role of relevant treaties in the areas of arms control, promoting security and confidence-building, and would be detrimental to the healthy and orderly development of international arms control and disarmament as a whole.

In view of the current international security situation, we must adhere to the principles of undiminished security for all States and sustained strategic balance and stability, while striving to find feasible approaches to revitalizing the Conference and other existing multilateral disarmament mechanisms.

First of all, we must strengthen political will to break through the impasse we are facing. Each member State must fully demonstrate political will and flexibility and, on a basis of mutual respect, give appropriate consideration to the legitimate security concerns of the other States. By holding consultations on an equal footing, bridging differences and building consensus, solutions can be reached that are acceptable to all.

Secondly, we must remain confident and patient, and adhere unwaveringly to the principle of consensus. The principle of consensus has a role and a significance that have stood the tests of time, and it is widely applicable to the multilateral disarmament machinery and related processes that address international security as well as the fundamental security interests of all States. As a core rule of procedure of the Conference, consensus is an important safeguard mechanism by which all States can equally protect their security interests.

Finally, we must endeavour to create a favourable external security environment. We should be fully aware of the impact of the current international security situation on disarmament and arms control. Strengthening dialogue and communication, building mutual trust and giving consideration to legitimate security concerns will create the external conditions and an atmosphere conducive to revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly thank all of you for your sincere goodwill and for your support of the Chinese delegation over the past three years. The Chinese Lunar New Year is right around the corner, so I would extend my wishes to all of you for good health and success in your work.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement. I must say that I regret that you are leaving. I know I speak on behalf of the Conference when I wish you the best in your new responsibilities. On a personal note, I have to say that I will miss you. I will miss the open, transparent and frank exchange that we have always had, not always sharing the same views but nevertheless frank, open and transparent. I wish you the best.

(spoke in Spanish)

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Spain.

Mr. Herráiz (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the remarkable zeal you have shown during your presidency in your efforts to advance the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to thank you for the opportunity you have given us to reflect on some conclusions we might draw from the discussions held in plenary meeting last week, and in particular from the analysis of various aspects relating to nuclear disarmament and the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

Spain has participated in all three conferences held on this issue since 2013, in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna, and we share the international community's concern about the devastating humanitarian impact that the detonation of a nuclear weapon would have. With this in mind, we are of course committed to achieving a world without nuclear weapons: that is an objective that we should all share and that we can achieve effectively by adopting a series of realistic and responsible disarmament measures. The elements of this process — which, while progressive, should be no less firm, resolute and determined — should include requirements for the nuclear Powers to gradually reduce their arsenals and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their national security strategies. It should also include a push toward the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and expedited entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This series of measures should be part of a balanced effort to implement all three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the action plan adopted in 2010, which already contain specific references to the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and to the need for due concern about and awareness of this situation.

Aware of the challenges facing the international community with respect to stability and security, we believe that this is how progress towards a world without nuclear weapons can be achieved effectively and responsibly.

The next NPT Review Conference will provide an excellent opportunity to strengthen the balanced implementation of all three pillars of this instrument, including the requirement for nuclear-weapon States to increase their disarmament efforts so as to fully meet their obligations under article VI of the treaty.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of Spain for his comments.

(*spoke in English*)

Is there any other delegation, any other member or observer wishing to take the floor? I see none.

I thank you again and, with this, we conclude our business. First, however, the Secretary would like to make an announcement.

Mr. Fung (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament) (*spoke in French*): I am taking the floor in response to two points raised. The first concerns the composition of delegations. You will recall that, two weeks ago, we sent a reminder asking you to provide us with a full list of the members of your delegation. I urge those delegations that have not yet done so — and I will name them in just a second — to send their delegation lists to the secretariat. They are: Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Viet Nam, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uruguay.

The second point I would like to clarify concerns the invitation to the meetings of the high-level segment of the Conference that the President and the Secretary-General

sent to all delegations. I wish to inform you that the secretariat has begun scheduling these meetings, which will begin on 2 March and will preferably run from 2 to 5 March, but, as you know, delegations are free to have their dignitaries attend at any point during the session of the Conference, as they see fit. These were the two points I wanted to address this afternoon.

The President: This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Tuesday, 10 February 2015, at 10 a.m. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.