

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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


Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 17 February 2015, at 10.10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Vaanchig Purevdorj.....(Mongolia)

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**The President:** I call to order the 1339th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues, we have received a request from Lebanon to participate in our work as an observer during the 2015 session. This request is now before you in document CD/WP.583/Add.4, which includes all the requests received by the secretariat until yesterday, 16 February 2015, at 4 p.m. All requests from non-member States received after that date will be presented for your consideration and decision at the next plenary meeting.

Are there any comments on these requests? May I take it that the Conference decides to invite Lebanon to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** I would like our proceedings today to be divided into two parts. The first part will be devoted to general statements as per the e-mail you received from the secretariat last Friday. The second part will be devoted to a briefing by the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Møller, on the preparations for the Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum.

I would first like to make a few opening remarks as the incoming President.

Within its broad commitment to the multilateral system, Mongolia has always placed disarmament in all its aspects at the top of our priorities for the simple reason that it is fundamental to global peace and security. As a member of the disarmament machinery, Mongolia wishes to reiterate its firm commitment and aspirations to contribute to strengthening international peace and security.

As we all witnessed today, the global security environment has been deteriorating increasingly and these developments have had negative fallout for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Notwithstanding the professed goal of a world without nuclear weapons, disarmament efforts remain stagnant. Therefore, my delegation firmly believes that all member States should do their utmost to build consensus and to promote greater global security through arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

Mongolia recognizes the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament and looks forward to an earnest solution to the ongoing stalemate in the Conference.

As the President of the Conference over the coming weeks, my delegation will spare no effort to make progress in our work. We are very hopeful that all members of the Conference will demonstrate the necessary political will and flexibility in order to move forward.

Having said that, I wish to share with you my delegation's plan for proceeding with the work of the Conference during our presidency. Before doing so, I wish to extend our sincere appreciation to my immediate predecessor, Ambassador Lomónaco of Mexico, as well as his team, for the extensive efforts and initiatives to move the work of the Conference forward.

The deliberations on the previous President's proposal on the programme of work, as well as on the draft decisions on civil society participation and the methods of work and the interactive discussion on expansion of the membership all have clearly indicated that we need to do more. With a view to following up on this proposal and initiatives, I have been consulting with delegations and will continue to do so. Although there are different views on these issues, we should try our best to narrow the gap and carry on substantive discussions. Therefore, it is my intention to convene formal plenary meetings during our

presidency to have a focused debate and exchange views on the four core issues which are directly related to the programme of work, namely nuclear disarmament, a fissile material cut-off treaty, prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances. I believe that last year's structured informal discussions on the issues were valuable and that could serve as a good basis for moving forward. I also consider that substantive and focused discussions would help us to identify common ground on those issues.

Furthermore, as we all are preparing for the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, which is very important to advancing our agenda of disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, I am confident that all Conference members will agree with me that holding substantive discussions on core issues, such as nuclear disarmament, is very timely and relevant.

I thus suggest the following dates for plenary meetings: 24 February, to focus on the topic of nuclear disarmament; 26 February, on a fissile material cut-off treaty; 3 March, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space; and 10 March, on negative security assurances.

Certainly, these would not be pre-negotiations or negotiations on the issues, but simply my effort to generate a better understanding of where we are now on those issues. However, as the rules of procedure state, it is the right of any member State of the Conference to raise an issue related to the work of the Conference at a plenary meeting.

In parallel, as I mentioned before, my delegation will continue consultations on the issue of the programme of work. Many delegations suggested that it would be helpful if we renewed the mandate of the informal working group on this issue. Therefore, I will make an effort to proceed with re-establishing the informal working group and will share with you developments in my work as soon as possible. In this regard, I wish to point out that your input and cooperative approach would be highly appreciated.

At the same time, with a view to better organizing the work of the Conference for 2015, I will also be working closely with all delegations on the draft schedule of activities for the current session. On this matter, your contributions and constructive suggestions would be appreciated. My delegation looks forward to cooperating with you in a sincere and constructive manner. We will welcome suggestions and proposals.

That concludes my opening remarks. In the past weeks, we have addressed a number of very important topics. In my opening statement, I highlighted the main points of my presidency. I think it is now time that I listen to you. I now open the floor for your comments and general statements.

I recognize the representative of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Pollard** (United Kingdom): At the outset, let me be the first to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency. We take this opportunity to offer my delegation's full support during your tenure. Certainly, we are supportive of your efforts to renew the mandate for the informal working group on a programme of work and on the schedule of activities.

I would just like to draw the attention of our colleagues to the successful conference held by the five NPT nuclear-weapon States in London on 4 and 5 February, where many issues of mutual concern were addressed in a collaborative and cordial atmosphere. I would therefore like to inform colleagues that we have requested that the conference's statement — its conclusion — be circulated as a Conference on Disarmament document for everybody's information here.

**The President:** Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

I now invite the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Michael Møller, to provide you with some up-to-date information on the organization of the Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum.

**Mr. Møller** (Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, we are almost a month away from the informal forum that I am organizing and I wanted to take the opportunity, as I had promised, to update you on where we are with the preparations. Let me walk you through some of the various aspects of the preparations, the programme, the event, the panellists, the list of invited civil society representatives and the funding.

The programme, as I mentioned before, has not changed. It will be structured as follows: there will be opening remarks by myself, as Chair of the event; there will hopefully be a keynote statement by a high-level dignitary; there will be five panel discussion sessions — one on nuclear disarmament, one on a fissile material cut-off treaty, one on negative security assurances, one on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and a final one on wrap-up and the way forward. Then there will be a summary by the Chair.

All the substantive panels will be moderated by someone from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). Each panel will be composed of two member State representatives and two civil society representatives. We have tried, and we are still trying very hard, to make sure that the composition of the panels provides a diversity of views on the core issues that your Conference has been dealing with.

At the end of the forum, I will issue a Chair's summary, which will be an informal document. This will be in keeping with the nature of the forum as an informal activity organized in my personal capacity as Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

On the keynote speaker, I am still following up on a number of contacts that I have made with a number of high-level dignitaries. I hope that I shall be able to conclude that in the coming days. I will get back to you once I have confirmation.

The composition of the panels is still in progress. There are still a few outstanding members to be part of them, but let me go through each one of them with what we have so far. As soon as it is finalized, the secretariat will send you an e-mail with all the names on each panel.

On nuclear disarmament, the two State representatives will be the United Kingdom and South Africa. From civil society, we will have Ms. Susi Snyder, of PAX in the Netherlands; the second one is still to be confirmed. The moderator will be Mr. Jarmo Sareva, the Director of UNIDIR.

On the fissile material cut-off treaty, it will be Canada and Algeria from the member States; and from civil society, it will be Mr. Zia Mian, of the International Panel on Fissile Materials, and Ms. Patricia Lewis, of Chatham House. The moderator will be Mr. Pavel Podvig of UNIDIR.

On negative security assurances, the State representatives will be Brazil and Germany; and from civil society, Mr. Aaron Tovish, of Mayors for Peace, and Mr. Héctor Guerra, a civil society advocate in international diplomatic processes on disarmament issues. The moderator will be Mr. Tim Caughley of UNIDIR.

On the prevention of an arms race in outer space, the first member State will be Russia; the second has still to be confirmed. I hope to have that either today or tomorrow. From civil society, we will have Ms. Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, of the Observer

Research Foundation, and Ms. Gabriela Irsten, of Reaching Critical Will. The moderator will be Mr. Ben Baseley-Walker of UNIDIR.

For the panel entitled “The way forward”, there are two States that have agreed to be part of the panel — the United States and Mexico; and from civil society, there will be Ms. Mia Grandenberger, of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, and Ms. Patricia Lewis, of Chatham House. The moderator will be Mr. Jarmo Sareva, our colleague from UNIDIR.

Let me take this opportunity to thank those of you who have already responded positively to serve as panellists.

We have extended invitations to more than 100 civil society organizations. A list will be distributed to you, if it has not already been: it is not an exclusive or exhaustive one — there may be additions, but this gives you an idea of the breadth of our invitees. The list stands now at 121 invitees. These include NGOs, research institutions and think tanks working in the field of international security, arms control and disarmament. An effort has been made to reach out to a diversity of organizations in all regions.

The regional dimension effort may be challenged a bit by a lack of resources — we shall see where we stand in a few weeks — to cover participation of those who cannot pay for their trip to Geneva. I do hope that wherever we are on the funding, and I will get back to that in a moment, that we will have a sizeable number of representatives to generate a good interactive debate.

On the funding, as I explained in the message sent to you on 24 December, we need some funding to cover costs relating to the participation of civil society panellists, as we had decided we would pay for the trip for those not based in Geneva and a modest sandwich lunch. The estimated budget required for this would be around 40,000 Swiss francs.

We had thought of hosting a networking event but, for a variety of reasons, including the funding issue, we decided to drop that. Also, a number of participants may wish to leave on that afternoon anyway.

I have already received some funding from the Netherlands and from Switzerland. I thank both of these countries very much for their generous contribution. At this stage, however, confirmed funding covers only about a fourth of what we need. I was thinking this morning that maybe instead of a few paying a lot, it would be nicer if a lot paid a little less. So, if many of you gave a little, then we might get to where we need to be. Quite a few delegations have indicated the possibility of providing some financial support to the forum. I would appeal to those who have come forward already, but have not finalized, to do so as soon as possible in order to help us with our planning. Of course, I would welcome any new contributions very much.

If, by any chance, the contributions exceed the costs of the basics, which is, as I said, paying for the trips of the panellists and paying for the lunch, then I would want to use the surplus funds to cover the travel of those NGOs coming from far away and whose finances would not normally permit them to come.

I very much value the input and the feedback that I have received from the members of the Conference and from civil society representatives in the preparation of this forum. As I said, we will send you an e-mail as soon as we have finalized the full list of participation on the panels, so that you have that; you should be receiving the other list now.

**The President:** Thank you, Mr. Møller. We look forward to this event. Would any delegation like to take the floor to make comments in relation to the updated information provided by the Acting Secretary-General? The representative of Russia has the floor.

**Mr. Deyneko** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament for the detailed and informative briefing on how he intends to organize and conduct the informal meeting between the Conference and civil society.

I think that we should all take inspiration from the Acting Secretary-General's style. Everything is done transparently and democratically, allowing everyone to say what they want, put forward proposals and make observations. I would like to see the same style here at our Conference.

I do not actually have any comments to make, just one small question I would like to ask. As you know, we had a lively discussion here last week on the participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society in the work of the Conference. It arose from a draft proposal put forward by the Mexican presidency. There were a lot of questions about the criteria for the choice of NGOs to take part in our activities. In that connection, Acting Secretary-General, perhaps you could share your experience with us: what criteria did you use to choose the organizations that will attend the informal meeting between the Conference and civil society?

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Russian Federation. Would any other delegation like to take the floor on this subject? That does not seem to be the case. I now give the floor to the Acting Secretary-General.

**Mr. Møller** (Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): As I mentioned at the outset, way back when I proposed this, the idea was to secure representative and geographically diverse participation of NGOs and members of civil society having expertise and working in the field of disarmament. That was the overall direction given to my colleagues. If I may, let me share the floor with the Acting Deputy Secretary-General, who provided guidance and whose office and staff were the ones who actually put the list together, so you can have as detailed an answer as possible.

**Mr. Markram** (Acting Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Basically, the list that was used was based on looking through the NGOs that have participated in various forums across the whole spectrum of work related to the Conference on Disarmament. So, those NGOs were identified. It also includes a number of individuals proposed by various members here who have been involved in this. If you look at that list, you will see Mr. Héctor Guerra is on it: he is stationed here in Geneva, he is a known NGO here — although he may not represent an organization as such, he is a well-known civil society advocate. There were also a couple of other names proposed of individuals who are members of civil society. They may not belong to an organization or have a website or be a known organization as such, but they are well-known figures in the NGO world, so they have also been invited.

As the Acting Secretary-General pointed out, the list is not exclusive. If there are any more suggestions from anyone, provided that they have a known record or have been involved in work related to the Conference, they obviously can be included. A number of such representatives were also proposed by Governments and have been included on the list.

**The President:** I thank the Acting Secretary-General and the Acting Deputy Secretary-General. I now recognize the Ambassador of France.

**Mr. Simon-Michel** (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency and by assuring you of my delegation's support to you and your colleagues during your term.

I would like to make a few initial comments on the list, which I realize is not definitive. I am still glancing through it and will be reading it more closely, but we have always stressed the importance of maintaining a balance and being open to all points of

view, especially from the areas of strategic research and academia. I think it is also useful, as the Acting Secretary-General has recalled, to have geographical balance. In that regard, I do not think we should limit ourselves to the organizations that the Conference on Disarmament regularly hears from and which, incidentally, represent a specific point of view that is, in my opinion, a bit narrow, particularly from a geographical standpoint. We will be taking a closer look at that. I get the impression that some names, including those of some individuals, come up over and over again, so we might consider reaching out to invite members of academia, for example. That would increase representation of that sphere and move us outside the circle of people we usually see in Geneva. I notice that there are practically nothing but English-sounding names — not quite, but almost. This is not in any way a failing, of course, but it is my initial impression when reading the list. Again, I am reading through it for the first time, so I will need to take a closer look.

**The President:** I now recognize the representative of Australia.

**Mr. McConville** (Australia): Allow me also to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency. I extend the full support of the Australian delegation to you during your term. I also warmly welcome the further details provided by the Acting Secretary-General. This is a very worthy initiative that Australia is certainly supportive of and we do hope we can confirm some financial assistance in the coming days. We will obviously participate in the process, and I think this is certainly an initiative that meets a lot of the demands for greater participation by civil society in the work that we do. We will look at other ways we can further that in the coming weeks.

Can I also just raise an issue in relation to the schedule of activities that has been noted by the President in his introductory comments? Just a couple of clarifications, if I could. We note the dates that have been presented, but is there also a proposal to appoint special coordinators in relation to these schedule of activities sessions, and if so have those individuals been identified? I think one of the lessons from last year was that it was a productive session when we were able to have time to prepare and also to have experts that came along and added some added value to the work that we were doing. So, I just would be interested in further details on those sessions that have been flagged as taking place under your presidency.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Australia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I would like to respond and provide a brief clarification about the plan for our work over the next few weeks. The idea is to hold formal plenaries focused on the four core issues and the schedule of activities that we would also like to work on for the remaining part of this year, as we did last year. We will consult and will be working in that direction. For the moment, with regard to coordinators, the consultation is open-ended; we will consult the delegations on this. We will inform the Conference about developments in the work in these two areas of the informal working group and the schedule of activities.

I now recognize the representative of Algeria.

**Mr. Khelif** (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, the Algerian delegation would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of your role guiding the activities of the Conference on Disarmament in the current somewhat delicate circumstances. I would like to assure you of our complete support as you seek to find a positive way forward for the work of the Conference, and we invite other delegations to give you similar consideration and support as you carry out that role. We would also like, once again, to thank the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference for organizing the informal forum between the Conference on Disarmament and representatives of civil society to discuss items on the Conference's agenda. We look forward to participating in that event in the hope that it will be a foundation for further steps which will enable us to

promote engagement with civil society, benefit from the expertise and assistance that civil society can offer us and profit from its views on the issues facing us in the Conference, particularly that of nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President, when I first joined the Conference in 2004, the presidency was held by Morocco and today we see that the representative of Morocco is on the podium ready to assume the mantle again when your presidency ends. In other words, the Conference has been through a complete cycle and, despite its best efforts, has been unable to negotiate or undertake substantive work on the issues which threaten international security, especially the immense nuclear arsenals and lethal nuclear doctrines which are a legacy of the cold war. The political reasons why the Conference has been unable to tackle these issues are well known to us all. I say this because the principal issue facing the Conference, especially today on the eve of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, is reaching a consensus on a programme of work which will enable us to begin negotiations on the points upon which we can reach agreement.

Mr. President, we listened with interest to your proposals to re-establish the informal working group on the programme of work and at the same time to continue consultations on the programme of work. While we are in no doubt about the results that could emerge from consultations carried out by the working group, we do have some misgivings about its ability to overcome the obstacles which arose last year and prevented us from reaching a consensus on the programme of work. Those obstacles are set forth frankly and in detail in last year's report of the Co-Chair and Vice-Co-Chair of the informal working group, a copy of which is on file with the Conference secretariat. That being said, we are ready, should there be a consensus, to collaborate with the working group. Moreover, this year we are not starting from zero: the previous Mexican presidency of the Conference furnished us with an important proposal on the programme of work, one which contains many positive aspects, and we have announced our willingness to join any consensus thereon. Unfortunately, however, insufficient time was given to allow us to consult on that proposal and to attempt to reduce our differences on the one point that prevented us from adopting it: negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissile materials. As the previous President of the Conference said, that document now belongs to the Conference. We therefore hope, Mr. President, that in your consultations, or the consultations of the working group should it be established, that that document will be taken into consideration and that attention will focus on the disputed points in order to enable us to reach agreement on the programme of work. As regards the discussion agenda, this is not the first time the Conference has attempted either to reach agreement or to undertake substantive discussions on the agenda items, in accordance with a timetable, either at the initiative of the President or by decision of the Conference. This is not the first time that discussions have taken place under the chairmanship of coordinators. However, on most of the previous occasions the discussions took place informally and the reports adopted were written and prepared under the responsibility of the coordinator. If we wish to repeat that experience this year, we hope that we will build upon earlier accomplishments to move forward and, if this discussion agenda is adopted, that it will be adopted by decision of the Conference, that the discussions will take place in a formal setting and that they will be the subject of a report drafted by the coordinator or the President to be presented to the Conference for adoption at the end of the session. In this way, we will be able to take a step forward with respect to the experience of previous years and to lay a basis for future agreement on the points on the agenda of the Conference.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Cuba.

**Ms. Pérez Álvarez (Cuba)** (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you for your presentation, Mr. President, and for the explanation of how you see your presidency unfolding. As was the



case with the previous President, you have our support wherever needed. We stress that the most important thing is to try to agree on a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament this year and we think that we could, by and large, base ourselves on the proposals made at our first meeting regarding the various topics.

Concerning the list of NGOs that was distributed today, we realize that the Acting Secretary-General shared the document for information purposes and not for formal consultation with the Conference. However, my delegation would like to share some initial impressions concerning the document, in particular with regard to the selection criteria. We believe that, as Mr. Møller said, the criterion of fair geographical distribution among the regions is fundamental. It would also be important to have a thematic criterion: in other words, there should be a link between the topics to be discussed at the forum and the thematic content of the day-to-day work of the invited NGOs and civil society representatives. While I do think that there should be some variety in the topics covered, we should give priority — as I see was done in preparing this list — to the topic of nuclear disarmament as it is a universal priority at the international level.

You mentioned that the list is open and other delegations have agreed that it should be, but I think that it would be important to receive the final list when it is ready. I understand that this is a first draft and that it has not been shared with us for purposes of consultation, but it would be good to eventually have the full list of all the individuals and organizations who will take part in the forum. It would also be important to know in what countries these NGOs are registered, bearing in mind that different countries have different arrangements for registering NGOs, in order to truly ascertain whether there is fair geographical distribution. For example, I only see one NGO from China and maybe one from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or elsewhere in Asia. I am aware that some organizations register in a given country but have an international scope of action, while others are registered in a given country and work only on issues relevant to that country. So, for information purposes, we would really like to know — and I am certain you have this information, so it should not be difficult to find — where they are registered in order to see if the geographical distribution criterion is reflected in the list.

I understand that the civil society forum might become practice here in Geneva; we do not know if, ultimately, it will be a practice that the Conference might assume in the future. This makes the list especially important because it could easily be a precursor to NGO participation in the Conference. Again, I realize that this is not a formal consultation with Conference members and observer States, but I believe it would be important to have a little more information on where these organizations are registered and whether any have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council — although I do not believe that having such status should be a prerequisite for any organization to take part in a civil society forum. As a rule, it is the organizations from developing countries in the global South that do not have consultative status because the process requires considerable resources. It is almost always the larger NGOs that have such status and the funds to travel to Europe and take part in key meetings. That is another reason why I support your request to provide financing for the civil society forum, especially for the participation of organizations that do not have the financial means to take part. In my opinion, NGOs registered in developing countries should receive some form of financial support in order to travel from farther away to attend this important civil society forum to be held here in Geneva in March, which we believe is an excellent idea spearheaded by the Acting Secretary-General.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Cuba for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

**Mr. Omarov** (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): Regarding the list of NGOs invited to the civil society forum, might I ask the secretariat to consider inviting the representative

of the ATOM (Abolish Testing — Our Mission) project? The representative of ATOM has taken part in almost all the recent international events on nuclear disarmament, including the three conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. An invitation could thus be sent to the ATOM project by way of recognition. It would also help to address the issue of geographical equality. And one technical question: will the forum be held on 19 March or 13 March? It says 13 March in the list.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Kazakhstan for his statement. The next speaker on my list is Italy. I apologize: the request was from the representative of Ireland. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Jackson** (Ireland): It is not the first time that I have been mistaken for somebody else, Mr. President, although it is the first time that it has happened in Geneva ... and without the aid of television cameras.

Firstly, Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the task of President. You can be assured of the fullest cooperation of Ireland as a delegation. If I may follow with a question to the Acting Secretary-General, you have given us a very extensive list of NGOs and civil society organizations that have been invited. I am sure, like others, that it would be interesting to hear what percentage have actually accepted the invitation. I am sure we all organize large functions and the acceptance rate can vary enormously. In terms of balance, it would probably be easier to judge the balance once we get at the level of acceptances, but I suspect it is rather too early to give that answer yet. We would certainly be interested in hearing when you can provide such an answer.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Ireland. I recognize the delegate of Algeria.

**Mr. Khelif** (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I apologize for once again requesting the floor, but I just have one small question for the Acting Secretary-General. I see that this list of NGOs includes the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) among the invited organizations. We welcome the presence of UNIDIR as a participant and moderator as that will certainly be a bonus for the Conference's work. However, is UNIDIR really an NGO given that it is part of the United Nations, which is an intergovernmental organization? I was just wondering. I do not have enough background information to assess the other organizations. I see that there are research institutes and many other bodies, but I cannot tell if they are all NGOs or if some receive State funding and are attached to governmental entities. This is just a small point on which we would like clarification.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Algeria. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

**Mr. Van der Kwast** (Netherlands): I want to thank the Acting Secretary-General for his proposal, his list and his explanation. I have to say that I find it quite remarkable that, when we do such a normal thing in the United Nations as talking with NGOs, this body looks only for problems, not for solutions and possibilities. The Netherlands will contribute to this initiative. We think this is a good initiative and it would be good if more States spent their expensive diplomatic salaries not on trying to find problems in lists of whatever nature, but on trying to find possibilities for moving forward on such important issues as disarmament.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. I now invite the Acting Secretary-General to take the floor.

**Mr. Møller** (Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Let me first remind you all that this is an informal — let me underline that word: informal —

meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and civil society convened by me in my personal capacity, so a number of the questions and comments that you have are not that relevant in terms of formality. Having said that, I would like to anchor my response before I offer the floor to my Deputy for more detailed answers on some of the technical questions posed by France and to some extent by Cuba.

*(spoke in French)*

I am in full agreement with you, Mr. Ambassador, as to the need for the broadest possible geographical representation. I have said as much on multiple occasions, including the first time I addressed the Conference and suggested that this forum should be held. I have also often repeated my invitation to the members of the Conference that they submit the names of organizations that could make a useful contribution to our discussion. The problem is that not all the regions have the same wealth of civil society organizations, which makes the list somewhat asymmetrical. However, we have tried as much as possible to ensure diverse participation from various organizations and regions around the world.

That being said, we keenly await any suggestions you may have and will be happy to receive them. Kazakhstan just made one, and it would be helpful if the delegation gave us the contact information of the organization it mentioned. We would be very pleased to send an invitation provided the organization meets the criteria. I would ask that you do this as quickly as possible because the meeting is a month away and we need to give people a bit of time to reply.

*(spoke in English)*

Now, if I may come back to some of the questions from the representative of Cuba, as I said, the list is not final. We are still consulting, as I have just said: we are still open to recommendations. The list of things that are going to be discussed, as I mentioned, are the same as on the agenda of the Conference.

As to the point about where these organizations come from, Mr. Markram will answer some of these questions. However, there is a limit in terms of our human resources to how much background work we can do for a meeting that is not a formal one and, as I underlined before, this is an informal meeting.

As to financial support, I reiterate that it would be very welcome. If more of you are able to contribute to the holding of this meeting, even modest sums, it would be good as far as I am concerned. The broadest support possible for the holding of this informal meeting would be welcome. I hope that Cuba can join those countries that have already expressed an intention to contribute, and I look forward to that.

I also want to reiterate what I said earlier. Maybe some of you did not catch it, but the preparations for this event included not just consultations with member States but also extensive discussions and consultations with representatives of NGOs and civil society, who also made recommendations and suggestions as to who should be involved. All this was put into the mix and the result is still a work in progress. I repeat, and in line with what I have done so far, I will of course come back to the Conference before the meeting with a further update as soon as we have much more clarity on who is coming and who is not. That answers to some extent our colleague from Ireland: it is simply too early to say. We have had some responses and they are still coming in.

Mr. Markram will respond to the Ambassador of Algeria. I take his point about UNIDIR: it was simply a mistake that UNIDIR was put on the list. They are obviously part of the United Nations family.

To the Ambassador of the Netherlands, I would just thank him for his comment and I agree with you.

**Mr. Markram** (Acting Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): I do not have too much to add. I think the Acting Secretary-General has answered most of the questions.

In reply to the representative of Algeria: absolutely, that is a technical mistake, so we will remove it.

In reply to the representative of Kazakhstan: please provide us with the details and we will reflect that as well.

In reply to the representative of Cuba: I fully appreciate the point made about having full geographical distribution and trying to involve as many countries as possible from the developing world — absolutely — as well as looking at the thematic and the regional mix.

As I stated, most of these NGOs are those that have come to most of the disarmament meetings across the broad spectrum of issues, and particularly those that are relevant to the work of the Conference. Generally, when we look at the participation of NGOs, it has to be an organization that has a constitution, has a website and has a history of participation. That is the general rule applied to most of the meetings in which all of you, as member States, participate in a broader spectrum.

As the Acting Secretary-General pointed out, in the preparations for the civil society forum a number of countries around the table here suggested a number of individuals who have been included on that list. Some of them are well known to us and they have a record of participating in many of the events that are already taking place here. The list is not final. We would be quite happy to look at more proposals, so if there are any more suggestions out there from States, we would like to receive those.

Naturally, time is running out to bring any NGOs from abroad to these meetings. If you just look at the gallery above, you will see there are not too many participating at this stage, so we hope to have far more participating. If we receive funds, however, we will try to bring some from more distant regions. We would make our utmost efforts to do so, provided that we have the funds and the time to make those arrangements.

**The President:** I thank the Acting Secretary-General and Acting Deputy Secretary-General for providing responses and clarifications to the questions on this matter.

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

**Mr. Herráiz España** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate you on your appointment, Mr. President, and wish you all the best for your term, during which you may count on the support of our delegation. We welcome the idea of holding this forum and thank the Acting Secretary-General for the useful information he provided. We have two brief technical points. We would like clarification on the date of the event: is it scheduled for 19 March or, as the delegation of Kazakhstan has noted, 13 March? Regarding the comment made about the appropriateness of using English or, rather, the preponderance of NGOs from the English-speaking world, we do not take issue with this, quite the contrary. However, I would point out that NGO No. 51 is referred to in English when it is in fact an NGO from Spain called Instituto para Cuestiones Internacionales y Política Exterior. Given that it is the sole Spanish-speaking NGO on the list, it might be more appropriate to identify it in that language.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Spain for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. I now give the floor to the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference.

**Mr. Møller** (Acting Secretary-General of the Conference): Let me confirm that the date is 19 March. I am not quite sure where the 13 March issue cropped up, but, I repeat, 19 March — the whole day.

First of all, there will be interpretation at this meeting, obviously, and we will obviously respond to your request to have the names of the NGOs present in the original language. I repeat that this is an informal meeting. This is not a formal document, it will not be given a number or anything: it is simply for information purposes. If — apart from the UNIDIR issue and this issue — any of you has any concerns about any of the names, please let them be known to the secretariat and we will make rectifications in the next iteration of the list, which I hope to send to you well before 19 March. I see that, for some reason, it says 13 March on this list: that is a typo.

**The President:** I thank the Acting Secretary-General for the clarification provided. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of India.

**Mr. Varma** (India): We join others, Mr. President, in conveying to you our very warm congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We have noted with interest and attention your proposal on how you wish to structure the work of the Conference in the coming weeks, and we assure you that you will have the full support of the Indian delegation.

We would also like to thank the Acting Secretary-General for his briefing today and his responses to the numerous questions that have been raised. We also thank the secretariat for its efforts in taking this event forward.

This will be an important event and we are glad that the Acting Secretary-General has clarified that it is in his personal capacity. It is an informal event and we look forward to participating to see how it goes against the background of several proposals that we discussed in the first month of this annual session.

Our expectation is that we would like further clarity to come about as a result of this one-day event on what it is to the Conference on Disarmament, a member State-driven body with a specific mandate to negotiate international treaties on disarmament and non-proliferation issues in this new age of growing insecurity — also in this age of instant communications where people and groups are interconnected in a very different way than they were in the past. And also the fact that there are aspirations in the larger international community on how the world should move forward.

Therefore, these issues and expectations, that are normally raised in the Conference on Disarmament, on what we expect from the outside world, we feel will be amended or will have much to be corrected as a result of this 19 March event, because — as this list shows — geographical distribution, of course, has been a point that we ourselves have raised in the past and that has been shared by a number of other delegations.

But what is essentially a non-governmental organization itself is an issue. In this particular field, we have difficulty in non-governmental organizations wanting to contribute to the Conference on Disarmament when there are physical and logistical problems. But there is also a problem of expectations. When you look at this list, some of these institutions are not purely non-governmental. Some of them have direct funding from government. So, the notion that this event is only for non-governmental organizations, I think, needs to be expanded, and I think this was a point that the Ambassador of France also alluded to. May we therefore suggest that the title be expanded to say that this is an event dealing with non-governmental organizations, but also with academic institutions, research bodies and think tanks that may or may not necessarily be fully non-governmental? In our view, a non-governmental body is a body that has almost nothing to do with governments. However, we have come quite a distance from that more noble goal. The secretariat itself

has clarified that we are now including bodies that have been suggested by member States. The distinction between what is from the large unconnected civil society, unconnected to governments — I think we have moved away from that, which is fine: we are not objecting to that. But I think we should clarify in the title of this event that it involves non-governmental organizations but it also involves academic bodies, think tanks and individuals — we have seen some names included here.

As far as India is concerned, we will participate in this event because we wish to see it as an event that would clarify what exactly is the nature of contribution that the Conference on Disarmament can benefit from. The Acting Secretary-General himself clarified at one stage that this is not a precedent. We will wait to see what the outcome is of the 19 March event, and then take it from there. This is not a precedent; it has no formal impact on the Conference. It is for the Conference to decide how we go from there. Having said that, we truly welcome this event. It will be an important event and I do not recall another event in the context of the Conference on Disarmament where there has been interest from such a large number of bodies and institutions and individuals, which is something that we welcome.

Let me again thank you for your efforts and your contribution in this regard.

**The President:** I thank the representative of India for his statement, and now I give the floor to the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference.

**Mr. Møller** (Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Allow me to offer a couple of answers to the Ambassador of India. The original title remains: it is an informal Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum. This list is, I repeat, an informal list and a work in progress. The list says “non-governmental organizations” but the formal title, if you want, if there is such a thing as a formal title for an informal meeting, is the Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum; and that will remain, precisely because of the concerns or the points that you have just enunciated. It is not just NGOs: it is academic institutions, it is individuals that we have mentioned to you, and civil society in its broad understanding, and that understanding of the word is what we are looking for.

Allow me to remind you, and this in a way underscores what you said, that my original purpose for suggesting this was very simple. It was based on my conviction that in this day and age any United Nations body that does not, in some form or another, speak to civil society and engage in a conversation with it is an anomaly and an anachronism. My hope and purpose with this suggestion and with this informal forum is that if we do a good job, and if we have a substantive and useful conversation, that the very outcome of it, as informal as it may be, may lead the Conference to rethink the way that it engages with civil society in the future. It is part of a process of rejuvenation, if you want, or rethinking how the Conference conducts its work. If it happens, great; if it does not happen, that is fine, too. You are the masters of your own working methods and of the way that the Conference is: this was just a facilitating suggestion to maybe bring the Conference into the mainstream of how the United Nations as a family — as a whole — conducts its business. I cannot think of any other body in the United Nations context that has the kinds of rules that you have, where there is absolutely no interaction save one day a year with civil society. To me personally, and I think to my boss and to others in the system, it makes absolutely no sense whatsoever in this day and age.

That was the original purpose. It remains that way and I hope that we are going to manage to come up with an outcome that makes sense, that is substantive and that will enrich reflection in the Conference on Disarmament as it looks at how it conducts its business for the future.

**The President:** I thank the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference for providing a response. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

I would like to thank again the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference and the Acting Deputy Secretary-General for providing today's update on the organization of the Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum and for providing responses to the questions raised.

On behalf of the Mongolian presidency, I would like also to thank all of you for the expression of support and for your kind words addressed to the Chair and useful suggestions and comments.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Tuesday, 24 February 2015, at 10 a.m. As the suggested schedule mentioned, it will be on the topic of nuclear disarmament.

Before I adjourn this morning's plenary, I wish to take this opportunity to extend to all of you, in particular to colleagues who celebrate Asian lunar new year, my best wishes for well-being in the Wooden Sheep Year, which starts the day after tomorrow, according to the lunar calendar.

*The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.*