
Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand three hundred and forty-seventh plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 4 March 2015, at 3.10 p.m.

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

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The President: I call to order the 1347th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me at this stage to suspend the meeting so that I may go to the Salon Français to welcome our first guest for this afternoon, Mr. Charles Flanagan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. I would like now to extend a warm welcome to our guest of today, Mr. Charles Flanagan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland, and thank him for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. I have the pleasure and honour to invite Mr. Flanagan to take the floor.

Mr. Flanagan (Ireland): Mr. President, let me say at the outset that I wish to commend the very fine level of leadership that Mongolia has shown in disarmament, and indeed I was very pleased to instruct my officials to co-sponsor the resolution on the international security and nuclear-weapon-free status of Mongolia. I very much welcome the fact that this resolution was adopted without a vote at the General Assembly last year.

Our world faces substantial and difficult challenges, and nuclear disarmament remains one of the key moral questions of our time. Yet in spite of the great challenge that we have, I believe there are reasons to be optimistic.

Last year, on 24 December, the Arms Trade Treaty entered into force, which represented real hope and showed what can be achieved when we all work together for the common good. The Treaty is the first legally binding instrument to regulate the international trade in conventional weapons. My country, Ireland, which was one of the first countries to sign the Treaty, welcomes the fact that over 130 countries have now signed it. We look forward to working with the other States parties in ensuring a strong and effective implementation regime which will stem the unregulated flow of conventional arms, thereby saving lives, reducing human suffering and making our world a safer place.

Equally, the world has been able to agree that chemical and biological weapons should have no place in modern warfare. As we approach the 100th anniversary of the first use of chemical weapons during the First World War, the international community can take some solace from the strong and united reaction to the appalling use of chemical weapons in Syria and from the joint efforts to destroy these weapons that is still continuing, and to which Ireland is pleased to make a positive contribution.

Likewise, the international community continues to move forward together, within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, on the groundbreaking Ottawa (Landmines) Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, all of which makes a contribution to setting up strong international norms and outlawing those weapons which are found to be indiscriminate and inhumane in their effects. Indeed, Ireland looks forward to the first Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in September of this year, to be hosted by a fellow European Union member State. We see this as an opportunity to redouble our efforts to rid the world of these inhumane weapons. Ireland continues to be engaged with these and newer challenges, such as the issues thrown up by the possibility of lethal autonomous weapons systems, as well as the use of explosive weapons with a wide area impact in areas of population.

Let me say that 70 years on from the Second World War and those terrible scenes of devastation in Japan, the risk of nuclear detonation remains very real. Ireland, as the initiator of the resolutions at the United Nations which led to the negotiation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), has an abiding concern that the provisions of the Treaty should be both honoured and implemented. Suggestions that there is an equivalence of achievement in relation to multilateral nuclear disarmament as compared with other pillars

of the NPT are not supported by the facts. On the contrary, the imbalance across the three pillars continues to increase.

There are voices which tell us that it is in our interests that nuclear weapons are maintained and that we benefit from the stability they offer to the world order. The convulsions and bloodshed we see in so many regions suggest that nuclear weapons have not shielded us from conflict or provided any form of stability. Moreover, I firmly believe the consequences of nuclear-weapon detonation would negate utterly the stability of the world order, possibly for generations.

With this in mind, Ireland welcomes the renewed focus on the original rationale that motivated the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: concern about the human cost of an accident with any one of the 80,000 nuclear weapons then in existence. Despite reductions, which we both welcome and acknowledge, we cannot shy away from the fact that 17,000 of these inhumane weapons still exist, and with them the potential for a nuclear-weapon detonation at any time.

Ireland is therefore grateful to the Governments of Norway, of Mexico and of Austria for their leadership in hosting major international conferences on the humanitarian impact of a nuclear detonation. We need to ask ourselves whether we are prepared to acquiesce in a situation where, in one region or another, sooner or later, a nuclear weapon may one day be used or even set off accidentally. After all, we do know the extent of human suffering that will result and the incapacity of emergency services anywhere to cope.

There are those who argue that risks apply to disarming as well as to allowing the weapons to continue in existence. I contend that these risks are decisively outweighed by the dangers associated with keeping these weapons. We are continually learning about the risks inherent in the maintenance of nuclear weapons programmes, even more so now thanks to independent research in the United Kingdom and in the United States, and research which, so far, is based only on available declassified information.

Before joining you in this room, I met with the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Peter Maurer. I offered him my congratulations on his recent important address to the Geneva diplomatic corps in relation to nuclear disarmament. Ireland fully agrees with ICRC that there is a need to fill the legal gap to eliminate nuclear weapons. As President Maurer said, it is time to draw the legal, political and operational conclusions from what has been learned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty recognized over five years ago.

Why should ordinary citizens, whose safety and security Governments are obliged to protect, not be given full and transparent information about risks, so that they can make an informed judgment as to whether the unparalleled horrors of a nuclear holocaust can make it justifiable or logical to retain nuclear weapons? Just as Governments have a duty of care to their citizens' health and welfare, those same citizens have certain rights to information about potential risks which face them on a daily basis.

I wish to commend the Acting Secretary-General of this Conference for taking the initiative to organize an informal civil society forum later this month. Ireland is in no doubt about the value that our partners in civil society bring to the debate on disarmament. It is regrettable that the members of this Conference are not able to benefit fully from their expertise in a more systematic and dynamic way. It is the firm belief of Ireland that the goal of disarmament is generally shared by States, and I would like to reiterate my Government's strong belief that this Conference should expand its membership. If the goal of disarmament is to promote peace and security, as Ireland believes it is, why should a majority of States be excluded from the body which is mandated to negotiate a legally binding set of disarmament instruments?

The very first item on the agenda of this Conference, which was adopted on 20 January, is “Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament”. For Ireland, it is a matter of profound regret that it remains necessary to speak of ceasing the nuclear arms race, but the stark reality of the world in which we live is that the steps necessary to halt the nuclear arms race have not yet been taken. In a few weeks from now, it will be 20 years since Ambassador Gerald Shannon of Canada presented his report to this Conference on the most appropriate arrangement to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The ad hoc committee of this Conference that was to be established was not formed, and no negotiations on a treaty on this topic, or indeed any other disarmament treaty, have taken place in this Conference since then.

In 2013, the submission from Ireland to the United Nations Secretary-General recalled our consistent view that such a treaty must address both existing stocks and future production of fissile materials. The negotiation and conclusion of a treaty would halt the quantitative development of nuclear weapons. It would not necessarily halt a qualitative improvement in nuclear weapons. The stark evidence of the long-term effects of nuclear-weapon testing makes it all the more important that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should enter into force as a matter of urgency. I call upon those States whose ratifications are required to rid the world of the spectre of nuclear-weapon tests to do so at the earliest opportunity.

The Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons last December, like the preceding meetings in the series in Oslo and Nayarit, put the humanitarian dimension front and centre in the deliberations, and in doing so put the emphasis where it belongs, on the victims of nuclear detonations and testings.

In a fair and balanced way, facts and evidence were presented alongside the testimonies of survivors. For those who take issue with any of the findings, we would actively encourage their engagement in this crucial dialogue and invite them to point to the facts which they may dispute. The evidence presented clearly showed that the risk of nuclear detonation is greater than we realized, that the capacity to cope with such an event is hopelessly inadequate and that the effect would be disproportionately worse for women and children than it would be for men.

The importance of the Vienna Conference can be measured both by the number of countries represented, almost 160, and in the decision by the United Nations Secretary-General and, indeed, Pope Francis, to send personal messages. The Pope and many other religious leaders have now cast doubt on the moral rightness of keeping nuclear weapons for deterrence purposes. Pope Francis said, and I think it is important to consider what he said: “Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among peoples and States. The youth of today and tomorrow deserve far more” — and I agree, and I am sure we all agree.

The United Nations Secretary-General reminded us that “no country disputes the desirability of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world”. My country, Ireland, concurs with Secretary-General Ban’s remark that the more we understand about the humanitarian impacts, the more it becomes clear that we must pursue disarmament as an urgent imperative. If these weapons are judged by the vast majority to be bereft of moral justification and utilitarian value, if they have been shown to have appalling and indiscriminate destructive capacity, why then is there a reluctance to discuss legal pathways to eliminate them, as all States are obliged to do?

I commend the clear intention on the part of Austria in the pledge it made to present the findings from Vienna at the NPT Review Conference. I will endorse and support any effort to highlight the horrors of these truly inhumane weapons and the risks and dangers

they represent, and I shall do the same at the Review Conference in two months' time. Faced with the facts about the risk and consequences for the planet of a nuclear explosion, the Austrian Government undertook in the pledge to identify and pursue effective measures required under article VI of the NPT and bring about nuclear disarmament and an end to the nuclear arms race. Ireland joined our partners in the New Agenda Coalition last April in presenting proposals for discussions on those effective measures and the possible ingredients of a legal framework or instrument that would give expression to them. My Government is therefore entirely at one with the Government of Austria in this aim and notes that the pledge leaves open the precise legal pathway to be followed towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

The non-proliferation pillar of the NPT stands between us and a nuclear weapons free-for-all. Ireland has consistently argued for a balanced implementation across all three pillars of the NPT, and we attach equal importance to the non-proliferation provisions of the Treaty both on its own merits and as a contributor to the goal of disarmament.

We also wish to reaffirm the central importance of the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards system to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Together with many States present here, Ireland is an active participant in, and a strong supporter of, several export control regimes, the aim of which is to counter the proliferation of nuclear weapons technology, materials or expertise or know-how.

While Ireland has chosen not to include nuclear power in its energy mix, we recognize the right of all States parties to the NPT to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under article IV of the Treaty, subject to full compliance with the non-proliferation and verification requirements of the Treaty.

On 11 March, we will mark the fourth anniversary of the Fukushima-Daiichi accident, which reminds us all of the need to ensure that the highest possible standards of safety are in place and are renewed and improved. Ireland is acutely conscious of the transboundary nature of nuclear events and therefore underlines the need for international cooperation in this area. We commend and fully support the International Atomic Energy Agency's ongoing efforts to coordinate and share lessons learned from Fukushima.

Ireland believes that the NPT has reached a critical point and that the international community as a whole must rededicate itself in words and in deeds to effective multilateral and verifiable nuclear disarmament. This is not an aspiration but an urgent imperative, as the United Nations Secretary-General has said. Discussions on how to achieve full implementation of article VI and secure nuclear disarmament by the most effective and speedy means should start now.

I understand the irony of addressing these remarks in the Conference on Disarmament, which has failed even to agree a programme of work over several years. This should not, however, detract from their validity. We as Governments will not be forgiven by our citizens if we do not seek to afford them protection from the wholesale annihilation that would follow if a nuclear detonation occurred. This does not mean leaving ourselves defenceless. It means choosing a different method of defending ourselves in order to ensure the very survival of the planet. No matter who the protagonists are in any conflict, all should acknowledge that the potential appalling price of continuing to rely on nuclear weapons, despite the proven risks they entail, is far too high.

Failing to participate in discussions about ridding the world of these weapons through multilateral negotiations suggests clearly in my view a reluctance to meet treaty obligations freely entered into. Spending millions on modernizing weapons systems which should be banished from the world's arsenals appears to me to run counter to the direction favoured by the majority of countries, 155 of which have declared to the United Nations

General Assembly that nuclear weapons should never be used again in any given circumstances.

Finally, we also need to consider the need for women to be empowered and given agency in relation to disarmament discussions generally. Twenty years on from Beijing, and 15 years from the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), challenges very much remain in evidence. I have mentioned the research suggesting that for every two men who die of cancer due to exposure to radiation as a consequence of nuclear-weapon detonation, three women will die. The disproportionate effect on children is even greater, and this increases still further in relation to young girls. We know too, from the experience of conflict, the disproportionate effect which armed violence has on women and children everywhere, yet we still struggle to ensure equal representation and agency for women in arms control and in the negotiations on disarmament. For these reasons, Ireland will join with others to organize a side event at this year's NPT Review Conference to study gender and nuclear weapons from the double viewpoint of the disproportionate impact and the need for women's voices to be heard and given equal weight in the nuclear arms debate.

The NPT Review Conference represents a signal opportunity to make a break with the failed dogma of nuclear deterrence and to agree that we will commence discussion on effective measures for nuclear disarmament without any further delay. We should seize that opportunity.

The President: I thank Minister Flanagan for his statement and also for his kind words addressed to the President. Allow me now to suspend the meeting in order to escort Mr. Flanagan from the Council Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. I would now like to welcome our guest Mr. Benedetto Della Vedova, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, and thank him for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. I have the pleasure and honour to invite Mr. Della Vedova to take the floor.

Mr. Della Vedova (Italy): It is a great pleasure to address for the second time this Conference that still represents the most important multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. I wish to reiterate the commitment of Italy to the work of this Conference and congratulate you, Ambassador, on assuming the presidency of this assembly. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Acting Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Møller, and his team for their invaluable support to the work of the Conference.

Mr. President, let me express our deep appreciation for your constructive approach and your intention to promote further substantive discussions on a programme of work as well as on the core items of the agenda. We also welcome your proposal to create an ad hoc working group on the working methods of the Conference.

Major multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements have been negotiated within the Conference or its predecessor bodies, and they still represent impressive accomplishments of the negotiating forum of Geneva, which contributes to making the world safer. This is why the deadlock in the disarmament machinery is no longer acceptable. This Conference should resume its work without any further delay. The adoption of a programme of work and the start of effective discussion on key issues should be a main concern, and to this end flexibility will be essential.

We warmly welcome the efforts to actively involve civil society in the discussions of this assembly, and we therefore strongly support the Acting Secretary-General's proposal to convene an informal Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum on 19 March.

The coming months will be crucial for both disarmament and non-proliferation. The Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is approaching, and we should redouble our efforts to achieve a successful outcome. The NPT is the cornerstone of a global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and an important element in the further development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. We want to reaffirm our commitment to create the conditions for a safer world for all without nuclear weapons, in accordance with article VI of the NPT. Any further progress should be based on considering the three pillars of the NPT as mutually reinforcing. In this prospect we reaffirm our full support for the implementation of the 2010 Review Conference action plan.

As far as major regional crises are concerned, Italy made a significant contribution to the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons, providing concrete assistance to both the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. An Italian port facility was made available for the trans-shipment of Syrian chemical agents before their destruction on United States vessels. Moreover, we strongly support the ongoing diplomatic efforts of the five permanent members of the Security Council, Germany and the Islamic Republic of Iran to reach final agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme. Looking forward to an agreed comprehensive long-term solution of the Iranian nuclear issue, we sincerely hope that the 31 March deadline for reaching a political deal will make it possible to bridge the remaining differences.

Furthermore, we commend the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for its crucial role of verification and monitoring. On the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, we fully support the tireless efforts of the facilitator and co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution to reach consensus on a date and agenda for the Helsinki conference as soon as possible. We will continue to support their action and ongoing preparations for a successful Conference.

We share the widespread concern over the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of a nuclear weapon. They are of serious concern for us and for those who share the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The importance of this issue is clear: it was endorsed in the Final Document adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

It is of paramount importance to participate constructively and substantively in all relevant discussions on nuclear disarmament with a clear focus on practical and effective measures. We should avoid creating shortcuts that do not contribute to the mutually reinforcing goals of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Incremental steps towards nuclear disarmament represent a realistic way of reaching “global zero”. We welcome the outcome of the recent conference held by the five NPT nuclear-weapon States in London and the ongoing process that helps to increase transparency and build confidence among them.

Italy is also fully committed to the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which would strengthen the international non-proliferation regime. At the end of March we will host the nineteenth Edoardo Amaldi Conference, devoted this year to international cooperation for enhancing nuclear safety, security, safeguards and non-proliferation, which will provide an important forum for experts and scientists to discuss enhanced nuclear safety, security, safeguards and non-proliferation.

Within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, the negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material (FMCT) remain a priority. Italy is part of the Group of Governmental Experts on an FMCT that will conclude its work soon with the aim of revitalizing negotiations on this treaty. We welcome the substantive and fruitful discussions held within the Group, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Canadian Chair for her excellent work and effective leadership. We are looking forward to

the conclusion of this exercise and the report of the Chair of this Group in order to further advance the work of the Conference on this issue.

Increasingly over the last few years, Italy has paid special attention to education, training and institutional capacity-building as essential elements for fostering international peace and security. The International School on Nuclear Security organized in 2010 by IAEA and the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste will hold its fifth annual training course in 2015. We believe that educational efforts should lie at the root of any strategy which aims at strengthening a global response to threats involving weapons of mass destruction and preventing non-State actors from gaining access to sensitive material and knowledge. For this reason we have announced a high-level event entitled “The Nuclear Security Summit 2016 and beyond: the role of training and support centres and centres of excellence”. The event will take place in Bologna on 7 and 8 May 2015.

I would like to recall the message of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, stressing that “the need for progress in multilateral disarmament is greater than ever”, because of increasing tensions and instability around the world. Italy will not spare any effort in supporting the work of this assembly. Disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation are essential components of our foreign policy.

As a candidate for a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council for the 2017-2018 term, Italy will further promote the disarmament agenda at the United Nations, as we have consistently been doing in all multilateral forums, including this Conference, the Group of Seven and the European Union.

The President: I thank Minister Della Vedova for his statement and also for his kind words addressed to the President. Allow me now to suspend the meeting to escort Mr. Della Vedova from the Council Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. I would now like to welcome our guest Mr. Edgardo Riveros, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, and thank him for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. I have the pleasure and honour to invite Mr. Riveros to take the floor.

Mr. Riveros (Chile) (spoke in Spanish): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on the work you and your team have carried out. As my country has expressed on previous occasions, we believe that — after 16 years during which the Conference on Disarmament has failed to produce any sort of multilateral commitment — it is time to explore other options together with civil society, which has been an important absent party here. We are therefore very much looking forward to the upcoming forum with civil society organized by the Secretary-General. At the same time, we deeply regret that the draft decision presented by Mexico to open the Conference up to full participation was not adopted.

Until such time as the Conference returns to engaging in the substantive work for which it was created, my country will continue to support any and all endeavours to seek alternative ways of unblocking the disarmament machinery. That is why Chile decided to chair the working group on negative security assurances, and I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the trust placed in our delegation. My country remains open to finding new ways to get the Conference back to work, whether through forums specifically focused on disarmament, such as the activities carried out here in Geneva, or by way of a new session dedicated to disarmament at the General Assembly or any other United Nations body, with a view to relaunching negotiations on all global disarmament issues in a balanced, non-discriminatory and democratic way.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation rank high among the international security concerns of Chile as part of its multilateral foreign policy. Since the return to democracy, my country has steadily and firmly pursued diplomatic efforts in support of initiatives to strengthen a world order based on full respect for international law and cooperation and in which weapons occupy a secondary role, as envisaged and mandated in Articles 10 and 26 of the Charter of the United Nations. Chile is a peaceful country which is firmly committed to globalization and a world order whose legitimacy is determined by the progressive application of rules that are negotiated on a multilateral basis. Our development model is open to the outside world and depends on global peace and security for the effective movement of people, goods and services. We see international security as a global public good that must be provided by all States regardless of size, population or military strength. For this reason, we consider that all members of the international community should take part in the quest for multidimensional solutions to the main global threats.

Within that perspective, on various occasions Chile has served as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, the main body of the United Nations system. Chile held the presidency of the Council for the month of January and launched initiatives aiming to protect civilians in conflicts and the rights of women in situations of violence and conflict, among other areas. The most recent and commanding multilateral initiative regarding nuclear disarmament is the so-called humanitarian approach to disarmament. Chile firmly espouses this movement because it is consistent with our foreign policy, which is focused on human security and considers people as the intended recipients of multilateral action to promote international peace and security. Accordingly, we advocate new forums for discussion and seek to build on initiatives and opportunities with potential for creating a world free of nuclear weapons. In this regard, we support the Austrian pledge formulated at the third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Vienna in December 2014, which was also endorsed by the Summit of Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This is not the only challenge that lies ahead. This year the ninth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the third Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones will be held. Chile, which chaired the latter conference in 2010, will hand the presidency over to Indonesia. Both conferences are extremely relevant in the current international context, which is marked, alarmingly, not only by an increasing number of conflicts but also by a worrying deterioration in cooperation between the main nuclear Powers. Those States have announced projects worth billions to modernize and technologically enhance their nuclear arsenals. This is cause for grave concern because a nuclear disaster, as has already happened in the past, could occur intentionally or unintentionally owing to a miscalculation or a temporary loss of control in the command systems.

We have seen at the Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons that there is no way of preparing for a nuclear catastrophe. A key way of mitigating this risk is to reduce arsenals' alert levels, and Chile will continue, together with its partners in the De-Alerting Coalition, to advocate practical ways of doing that.

Today's world, and the forces driving it, have changed. Countless organizations are lobbying for outcomes that reflect people's needs and expectations. The conventions on anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions and the recent Arms Trade Treaty are examples of such outcomes and of the virtuous relationship between civil society and States. Unfortunately, those instruments were not the result of the work of this Conference, which is the sole United Nations body responsible for negotiating disarmament-related issues.

Assimilating into — and adapting to — the multilateral approach of the Conference on Disarmament has been quite a challenge for Chile. Although we fully understand the need to reconcile public or global interests in terms of international security and peace with the national security needs and concerns of some States, every year it becomes more difficult to understand why a main body of the United Nations continues to remain inactive. It is not easy to explain this to our citizens, who expect concrete results on which trust can be built. The Conference has a respectable and admirable history of important multilateral achievements which were secured during a complex period of history, the cold war. But even during that period and despite much distrust, the Conference successfully negotiated various treaties which eliminated entire categories of inhumane weapons from the face of the Earth. That is the path that we should re-embark upon in this forum, overcoming distrust and working in the common interest of humankind.

In my country's view, the rapid evolution of world affairs over recent decades makes it absolutely necessary that we adopt a modern approach with a vision for the future. I am certain, Mr. President, that your successors will continue with the efforts launched by previous Presidents if we really want to see the light at the end of the tunnel. This is essential for global security and for protecting the world's citizens because, although we may sometimes lose sight of this fact, what we decide in this room has repercussions in every corner of the world.

If the Conference on Disarmament is to regain legitimacy and credibility, it faces the challenge of adapting to the emerging trends that are driving the international system. Most urgently, it needs to open itself to all members of the United Nations. Expanding the membership is of fundamental importance, because the image of the Conference as an exclusive club taking decisions on others' behalf, or trying to do so, must be dispelled. The current multilateral system is participatory and democratic, and it therefore needs a solid contribution from civil society.

I have spoken in frank terms on behalf of my country because I believe that is the way to contribute to decisive progress on an issue that demands special attention from everyone who walks this planet and possesses human sensibility.

The President: I thank Deputy Minister Riveros for his statement and also for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Allow me now to suspend the meeting in order to escort Mr. Riveros from the Council Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. We have exhausted the list of dignitaries wishing to address the Conference for this afternoon. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

Before we conclude our business for this afternoon, I would like now to give the floor to the Secretary of the Conference to update you on the programme.

Mr. Fung (Secretary of the Conference): Very briefly, I would like to invite delegations to visit the website as we have posted the schedule of activities for tomorrow, including the list of speakers for the high-level segment. There have been some changes. Tomorrow we will hear statements by Mongolia, Iraq and Colombia. Colombia is the new speaker that has been added to the list.

The President: That concludes our business for this afternoon. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held tomorrow morning, Thursday, 5 March, at 10 a.m., when we will hear addresses from dignitaries of Mongolia, Iraq and Colombia.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.