

Conference on Disarmament

English

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

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President: Mr. Henk Cor van der Kwast(Netherlands)

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The President: I call to order the 1359th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Please allow me, first of all, to thank Ambassador Maung Wai for having led our work so aptly during the presidency of Myanmar.

Today, it is my great pleasure to welcome Mr. Kim Won-soo, Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to our plenary meeting. As you know, Mr. Kim took up his new functions on 1 June 2015. He brings three decades of diplomatic experience, both bilateral and multilateral, to this post, beginning in 1978 when he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. Mr. Kim, we are very happy to welcome you in our midst at the Conference on Disarmament and are looking forward to listening to you in a moment.

As you know, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has appointed Mr. Michael Møller as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament in accordance with rule 13 of the rules of procedure. Mr. Møller, I am very pleased that you will continue — because it is in fact continuing — to work with us in this new function. You have contributed quite a lot so far to the difficult discussions in this body — let us not hide that — and we appreciate very much having you again among us.

As this is the first time that I am taking the floor as President of the Conference on Disarmament, allow me to make a short statement in that capacity. For the Netherlands, it is an honour to take up the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, although I know that some in this room may ask why. In this room we talk a lot about the lack of progress in disarmament. We complain about the ongoing stalemate in the Conference and in the disarmament machinery in general. What does that mean? Should we give up and wait for political will to arrive in the Conference, as some have argued? That would not be our preferred option. Political will rests also with us, the delegations. The question is: what can we bring to the table? Albert Einstein once said: “Learn from yesterday, live for today and hope for tomorrow.” The important thing is to not stop questioning and seeing where we can move forward.

Multilateral disarmament is difficult because it is about our individual and our common security, after all. It sometimes is a process of 99 steps backwards and 100 steps forward. In such a setting, it is sometimes difficult to see the forward momentum, but it is there. Only five years ago, no one would have thought that we would have an Arms Trade Treaty today, but we do; and many delegates here were involved also in those discussions. Nor would we have thought some time ago that Syria would give up chemical weapons and become a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, but this is happening now. The process has not ended and is still under way, but we are making substantial progress. Hopefully, we will soon be able to work out the final points on a deal on the Iranian nuclear programme; that, too, is enormous progress. To us these developments show that progress is indeed possible. They also show that making progress requires vision, patience, perseverance and, above all, hard work. In the view of the Netherlands, the only way forward is to keep on trying and to keep searching for common ground for a collective way forward. We stand ready to support all proposals and all creative ideas to move forward, provided that they are realistic, both in and outside the Conference.

So, what can we realistically do in this body? Maybe I should turn this question around and ask: what are you prepared to do? What are you willing to give? What can you live with beyond your usual positions? Eventually, we will all have to give something. We all claim that we have a common goal of a world without nuclear weapons, so we have to work for that. If we ever want to reach that goal, we had better start working on it now.

Under the Dutch presidency of the Conference, our main aim is to provide room for discussion as a means to search for common ground. Let me be very clear: we fully agree

with those who say that the mandate of the Conference is to negotiate and not to discuss. But how do we get to the start of negotiations if we do not agree and do not discuss with each other? We do not believe that the political will will appear overnight like a miracle, but we do believe that we have to work towards agreement by searching for common ground. Informal, frank and open discussions are a means to achieve this goal.

Turning to the schedule of activities, we have organized extra meetings on nuclear disarmament, a fissile material cut-off treaty, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and general disarmament. We are open to other suggestions. We have asked experts to stimulate discussions and to provide us with new ideas on a possible way forward. Although I realize that we are in a holiday period, I want to encourage all of you to actively participate in these discussions and to bring ideas to the table. I want you to ask yourselves what you can do — not what you cannot do. We ask for three concrete steps from you. One is to participate in the debate, and most of you do that on a regular basis. The second is to submit working papers on any issue you want, which we then can discuss. And the third element is to bring in, if you can, experts from your capitals or from your universities to this debate who can help us to explore new ground and further issues.

Allow me now to give the floor to Mr. Kim Won-soo, the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. It is with great pleasure that I give the floor to you, Mr. Kim.

Mr. Kim Won-soo (Republic of Korea): I thank you for giving me this opportunity to address this august chamber. As Ambassador Van der Kwast said, it is exactly one month since I took office and I felt I should do a pilgrimage of the holy sites of disarmament. I started my pilgrimage in The Hague, and then Vienna and now Geneva. I think this last stop at the Conference on Disarmament is a very fitting finish to my first pilgrimage.

Before I start with my statement, I would like to share with the members of the Conference one more piece of news on top of the great news of Michael Møller's becoming the Secretary-General (although I feel a little lonely in keeping my "acting" hat): you will have a Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference soon. He will serve also as the Director of my office in Geneva. I am sure all of you know Thomas Markram, who has served as the Director of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch in New York and twice as the Secretary-General of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in 2010 and 2015. He will come to Geneva to support Michael and also serve you here in Geneva. It is a big loss for me, but I think it is a good gain for the Conference here in Geneva.

Personally, I feel that it will be hard to fill the shoes of my predecessor, Angela Kane — not because her shoes are too big or too heavy, but because they may be a little too high for me! Still, I have to make an effort to live up to my title of Acting High Representative.

On a more serious note, whenever I visit this beautiful Palais des Nations, I am always moved by the artwork of José María Sert. The beautiful paintings around this chamber are an inspiring reminder of the potential which humanity possesses to achieve great things. It is also a reminder of the history of this body's accomplishments: the negotiation of treaties and accords that have made a lasting contribution to international peace and security. The world needs a functioning Conference on Disarmament now more than ever. In the words of the Secretary-General, the international community needs a Conference on Disarmament that helps us move towards a safer and better world. Because ours is a world of growing instability, it also lives in the shadow of nuclear weapons, continues to be the victim of the atrocities of chemical weapons and is a daily witness to the horrors of war and violence.

The Secretary-General asked me to convey his best regards to all of you. But he also asked me to remind all of you of what he has repeated to you four times over the past eight years in this chamber. At his first personal engagement with this body in 2008, the Secretary-General said: “The Conference on Disarmament has accomplished a great deal — but its successes are distant memories.” The Conference must show progress now. It has been nearly five years since the Secretary-General convened in New York the high-level meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference and four years since States met there; and every year the General Assembly passes a number of resolutions calling for the Conference on Disarmament to start its substantive work. Yet the stalemate persists.

The failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference to reach a consensus outcome, which is a source of disappointment for all of us, and the frustration felt by States parties make it even more urgently imperative for the Conference to break its two-decades-long stalemate. The regrettable outcome of the Review Conference underscores the need — now more, not less, than before — for a functioning multilateral dialogue on key issues of disarmament and non-proliferation. As the world’s sole disarmament negotiating body, the onus is now squarely on the Conference on Disarmament to bridge the divide between States and to get us back on the road to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Secretary-General once again asks you to move forward — and to move forward with urgency. As he told you last year, which was the auspicious Year of the Blue Horse in our part of the world: “Even though your mandate is to disarm, today I say: Arm yourself, arm yourself with the spirit of a blue horse and run. Run fast and run far.” Today, I appeal to you to demonstrate flexibility, to devise innovative solutions and, above all, to rebuild the trust necessary to move forward.

As one of the greatest Korean kings, a sage Korean leader and visionary who invented the Korean alphabets some 500 years ago, wisely noted: “One of the most essential ingredients of great statesmanship is trust, and it is especially important to express that trust.” I do appreciate that each of you has pressing national security concerns. I also understand the importance many of you place on a consensus-based approach when dealing with such important issues. But as the Secretary-General reminded this body in 2011, you must not let the process remain stuck indefinitely. He called on you to put aside differences and serve global interests towards building a safer world.

On many occasions, the disarmament agenda has proved that international solutions are consistent with enlightened national self-interest. We all share the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, as was highlighted by the NPT Review Conference, there is a growing rift in how and when to achieve this. I want to take this opportunity to recall the Secretary-General’s five-point action plan, which was released in 2008. The salient points are: first, the need for negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament; second, the need for non-nuclear-weapon States to receive unambiguous assurances that they would not be subject to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; third, the need to bring into force all your instruments in the field of nuclear disarmament, as well as to consolidate and further establish nuclear-weapon-free zones; fourth, the need for increased transparency by the nuclear-weapon States; and fifth and finally, the need for complementary measures that would support the disarmament process, including the elimination of other types of weapons of mass destruction and efforts to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Some significant progress has been made, but we still have a long way to go. We need to be realistic in pursuing tangible steps while continuing to aim high. These approaches remain pertinent today and are particularly relevant for the Conference. The Secretary-General reminds you to face the realities of the twenty-first century. The Conference can be a driving force for building a safer world and a better future. This is the very mission of the Conference.

In 2012, the General Assembly tasked a group of governmental experts to make recommendations on possible aspects that could contribute to but not negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material. The group has now agreed on a report, which, *inter alia*, reaffirmed the Shannon mandate as the most suitable basis for negotiations. The General Assembly will take up the report at its next session later this year. I understand from the Chair that this report has also been under consideration at the Conference, and I hope that you will consider the report a useful contribution and one which can advance your deliberations.

It is encouraging that your substantive discussions on the four core issues of the Conference's agenda are continuing. Your continued readiness to explore all avenues to agree on a programme of work and the recent re-establishment of the informal working group on this topic are also welcome. In this regard, I thank the coordinators for each substantive agenda item: Ambassador Ramadan of Egypt, Ambassador Biontino of Germany, Ambassador Rowland of the United Kingdom and Ambassador Aryasinha of Sri Lanka. My gratitude also goes to Ambassador Kairamo of Finland, who has agreed to co-chair the informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work. I hope the Conference will give due consideration to how to make this body as effective as possible. Any rules and practices that could be improved to support your work should be considered if they can help lift this Conference out of its current stalemate. Despite fatigue over the prolonged stalemate, there still exists widespread support for the Conference as the venue of choice for future disarmament negotiations. The international community is now eagerly looking to the Conference to validate that support. Continued stalemate is not an option. As the Secretary-General said last year: "Do not wait for others to move. Be the first to move."

I began my statement by commenting on the interior of this chamber. I now want to close by noting one of the quotes carved into the exterior of this chamber: "The nations must disarm or perish." That statement is as pertinent today as in the aftermath of the First World War, and I trust you will do your utmost to ensure that this Conference will fulfil that vision of the statement.

The President: I thank Mr. Kim, and I would now like to give the floor to the first speaker on my list, who is Ambassador Venkatesh Varma.

Mr. Varma (India): Mr. President, it gives us great pleasure to convey our congratulations on your assumption of the presidency, and we pledge to you our full support. We would also like to convey our appreciation for the excellent work undertaken by Ambassador Maung Wai of Myanmar as President of the Conference on Disarmament to take forward the work of the Conference. We extend our warm congratulations to Mr. Michael Møller on his appointment as Secretary-General of the Conference, and we appreciate his strong interest and support for our work. We would like to thank the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Kim Won-soo, for taking the trouble to visit us in Geneva and to address this Conference through his very important address. We appreciate the strong measure of support that he has expressed on his behalf and on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Conference.

India has been unwavering in its commitment to universal, non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament. Pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 68/32, India has supported the commencement of negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention on the basis of document CD/1999, submitted by the Group of 21 in 2014 and reiterated by the Group in its plenary statement on 30 June 2015.

Without prejudice to the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament, India supports the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices that meets the

national security interests of India. We hope that the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/53 will strengthen international resolve for the early commencement of treaty negotiations in the Conference on the basis of the agreed mandate contained in document CD/1299. We appreciate the fact that the United Nations Secretary-General has commended the Group of Governmental Experts' report to the Conference, noting that the Group had identified the Conference as the venue for negotiations, and urged the Conference to adopt without further delay a balanced programme of work that would allow early commencement of negotiations in the light of the Group's useful conclusions. We also note that the Acting High Representative has also referred to this particular aspect in his remarks.

India attaches high importance to the United Nations disarmament machinery established at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The triad of the disarmament machinery, which comprises the First Committee, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament, is the hard-won mechanism by which the international community gives expression and coherence to its efforts in the area of disarmament and international security. In recent years the disarmament machinery has faced several challenges. We believe that there is a need to recommit ourselves to the machinery while at the same time considering ways to improve the efficiency of its work.

As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament continues to bear a heavy responsibility to make progress on the international disarmament agenda. We believe that the Conference continues to have the mandate, the membership, the credibility and the rules of procedure to discharge its responsibility. Since the decisions of the Conference have an impact on national security, it is logical that it should conduct its work and adopt its decisions by consensus. We do not favour efforts to undermine the disarmament machinery or bypass the Conference.

While sharing the disappointment that the Conference has been prevented from adopting a programme of work, India remains committed to efforts consistent with the Conference's rules of procedure and aimed at commencing early substantive work. We have actively participated in the structured informal discussions on nuclear disarmament and on a fissile material treaty held thus far. These discussions, under the able coordination of Ambassador Ramadan of Egypt and Ambassador Biontino of Germany, have been in-depth and productive. Discussions under the Co-Chair of the informal working group on a programme of work, Ambassador Kairamo of Finland, have commenced in earnest. There is strong support for the appointment of a special coordinator, Ambassador Schmid of Switzerland, to look into work methods for the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. These are indeed encouraging signs and every effort must be made to consolidate them.

The United Nations Secretariat, in particular the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, has an important responsibility in assisting States in pursuing the multilateral disarmament agenda. We believe that the Office for Disarmament Affairs should be strengthened to facilitate the work of permanent bodies under United Nations treaties, such as the Biological Weapons Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. There is also a need to ensure greater coherence between disarmament work in New York and Geneva. It is equally important that the integrity of the Conference secretariat in Geneva is maintained and strengthened. We also support efforts to strengthen the support base for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research to make its work sustainable and relevant to current and future needs of the international disarmament agenda. We are particularly pleased that in his remarks the Acting High Representative has touched on several of these aspects.

Before I conclude and in anticipation of the statement by Ambassador Simon-Michel of France on his departure from Geneva, I would like to say a few words on behalf of the Indian delegation. Ambassador Simon-Michel represented his country with distinction; his professional and personal qualities were a huge asset to this Conference and in all forums where we had the privilege to work together. We will miss his profound knowledge of issues, his wide experience and wise counsel. In bidding farewell, we thank him for all his contributions and wish him all the best for the future.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador Fu of China.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You may count on the full support of the Chinese delegation in your work.

I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Myanmar, Ambassador Maung Wai, for his tireless efforts during his presidency.

I wish to take this opportunity as well to welcome the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Kim Won-soo, and to congratulate Mr. Michael Møller on his official assumption of the posts of Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference. We trust that they will continue to actively support the work of the Conference.

We wish also to express our regret at the departure of the Permanent Representative of France to the Conference, Ambassador Simon-Michel, and we wish him every success in his new post.

Mr. President, the second part of this year's session of the Conference is drawing to a close. Although the Conference has yet to agree on a programme of work, the member States have — on the basis of a schedule of activities — engaged in in-depth discussions on the core agenda items and have had candid exchanges of views on a programme of work in the framework of the informal working group. This contributes to creating a greater mutual understanding of each other's positions, building consensus and exploring practical ways of breaking the deadlock in the Conference.

We expect that further discussions on relevant issues in the remaining part of the session will be equally in-depth and fruitful. We also hope that the President and the Co-Chair of the informal working group, Ambassador Kairamo, will continue their efforts to further explore with member States the possibilities for drafting a programme of work that is acceptable to all.

I have explained on different occasions some of the Chinese delegation's views and thoughts about taking forward the work of the Conference, including the idea of addressing cybersecurity and other emerging international security and arms control issues in the Conference, negotiating and drafting policy instruments on issues such as space security and carrying out structured and substantive discussions on various issues on the Conference's agenda, so as to create the proper conditions for the future start of negotiations. I take note of the preliminary comments made by some of my colleagues. I sincerely hope that all member States will keep an open mind and respond positively to these proposals, bearing in mind the overall objective of taking forward the multilateral arms control and disarmament process and revitalizing the Conference.

China attaches great importance to the unique role of the Conference and is deeply concerned about the long-standing deadlock. The current situation makes it clear that the root cause of the stalemate is the lack of political will on the part of a number of members to start negotiations on the various items. We need to face this reality. At the same time, we should realize that breaking the deadlock and revitalizing the Conference requires flexibility from all sides and that this also requires political will.

The international situation is currently undergoing a profound transformation. Security threats are becoming more complex and diverse day by day, regional hotspots and armed conflicts are constantly erupting, and new technologies have triggered changes in the military, setting off a new type of arms race. Against such a backdrop, the role of the Conference and other international arms control and disarmament mechanisms in safeguarding and enhancing world peace and security, far from diminishing, is becoming even more important. We are deeply concerned by the fact that the Conference has not broken free of its stalemate and that a number of security and arms control negotiations that could perfectly well be carried out in this forum are taking place elsewhere.

As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference has a responsibility to perform its mandated role and begin substantive work as soon as possible. Therefore, rather than adhering rigidly to decades-old, established positions and insisting on going down the same beaten paths, member States should adopt a more open attitude and make the necessary political decisions. These could include reviewing their position on the Conference's traditional agenda items, being proactive in exploring ways to address important emerging issues in the field of international security and arms control within the Conference, or taking more flexible approaches to the traditional agenda items. No country should blindly push forward its own priority issues while categorically declining to take up any other matter raised by other parties. That will only result in a more deeply entrenched stalemate in the Conference and further marginalize its role in international security and arms control.

The principle of consensus sits at the core of the Conference's rules of procedure. We have always held the view that this principle provides important guarantees for member States to safeguard their national security interests in multilateral arms control negotiations. The history of the Conference has shown that, as long as there is sufficient political will from member States, the consensus rule has not and will not constitute an obstacle to the conclusion of multilateral arms control treaties. On the contrary, such a rule helps to ensure that negotiations take place in an orderly manner, and it also helps to ensure the effectiveness and the universality of the outcome of such negotiations. The principle of consensus should be applied in the negotiation of all legal and political instruments related to security and arms control.

We note that some States invoke the consensus rule with regard to issues they oppose but are willing to overlook it when pushing forward issues that are in their interest. Such an ignoble approach to the consensus rule is unacceptable.

A recent case in point relates to the decision taken by the European Union to organize, very soon in New York, multilateral negotiations on an international code of conduct for outer space activities. Along with many other States, China has in the course of previous multilateral consultations raised a number of concerns about procedural issues, including the venue and mandate for such negotiations, as well as issues concerning the content of the code of conduct itself, such as the exception made for the right of self-defence. Regrettably, these concerns have not been duly addressed by the European Union. In particular, it is unacceptable that, pursuant to the arrangements made by the European Union for the negotiations in New York, States must as a prerequisite forego the consensus rule in order to participate in the negotiations. We do not believe that this is an appropriate approach on the part of the European Union if it wishes to conduct the negotiations in good faith. We hope that the European Union will fully address the aforementioned concerns of China and other States and revise its methods so as to facilitate broader participation in the negotiations. We appeal to all member States once again to give serious consideration to the proposal to bring the negotiation of the code of conduct into the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: Thank you very much, Ambassador Fu, for your kind words and your suggestions for further discussion, which we definitely will pick up. I now have the honour to give the floor to Ambassador Wood of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation has the highest confidence in you, and you can count on the full support of the United States in your efforts to guide the work of the Conference. My delegation is pleased to join others in welcoming Acting High Representative Kim Won-soo on the occasion of his visit today to the Conference on Disarmament. I also wish to congratulate Michael Møller on his assignment and to thank the Myanmar Ambassador, Maung Wai, for his productive presidency of the Conference.

The United States remains ready to work tirelessly with other Conference member States to help overcome the current impasse. We have not forgotten that landmark agreements in the fields of arms control and disarmament were concluded here in the Conference. Amidst the ongoing frustration that we and many others in this chamber experience, we believe it essential to accentuate the opportunities for dialogue, while preserving the Conference's core mandate as a negotiating body.

While the United States supports and stands prepared to contribute to meaningful dialogue on all issues on the Conference on Disarmament agenda, the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty remains our priority in the Conference. We believe that this priority, which is overwhelmingly endorsed by the international community, can benefit from the work of the Group of Governmental Experts that, working on the basis of document CD/1299, explored possible elements of a fissile material cut-off treaty. In this regard, my delegation found last week's informal discussions on this subject highly productive and informative. I would emphasize, however, that the Group of Governmental Experts' work is intended not to bypass the Conference on Disarmament but to illuminate a path for the Conference itself to follow. This stands in stark contrast to efforts to conclude agreements that do not enjoy consensus or that seek to bypass the Conference on Disarmament altogether. Unfortunately, there are no viable shortcuts available to us that would lead to real progress.

In the context of our multifaceted dialogue to promote progress in the Conference on Disarmament, my delegation notes discussion among member States earlier this year regarding the Conference's engagement with civil society. While some previous proposals earlier this session gave rise to a number of substantive and procedural concerns among member States, we would encourage you, Mr. President, to consider developing, in consultation with all delegations, a proposal that would allow for civil society to address Conference member States similar with the approach taken each year at the United Nations General Assembly's First Committee during its session. We would welcome such an approach as timely and still appropriate for consideration during the current session.

The United States remains firmly committed to achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. In that spirit my delegation remains ready to engage with you and with all counterparts in this chamber to make progress on the path of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. That calls for rejecting quick fixes, reinforcing proven structures and using the valuable time and expertise available to us wisely.

In closing, I wish to note my delegation's best wishes to Ambassador Simon-Michel in his new assignment. Ambassador Simon-Michel has been a good friend and a very solid partner. We will miss him. We wish him well in his new assignment. We greatly respect your intellect and all that you have contributed to the debate here in the Conference on Disarmament on a whole range of issues. So, again, my delegation wishes you well.

The President: Thank you very much, Ambassador. Your suggestions and ideas, like those of others, have been noted. I now have the honour to give the floor to Mr. Deyneko of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to begin by congratulating Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast on his assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and Mr. Michael Møller on his appointment as Secretary-General of the Conference — without the modifier “Acting”. I wish you both success in your new roles. As ever, you can count on the support of the Russian delegation.

We are also pleased to welcome Mr. Kim Won-soo, who found time in his busy schedule to attend the Conference.

All those present know that the Conference has not been conducting negotiations. We, the member States, talk about that openly, but, more significantly, we are also making specific and energetic efforts to break the protracted deadlock in this forum.

The prompt adoption of a programme of work is the focus of our attention. To that end, the informal working group has been re-established and is working actively to find mutually acceptable outcomes. We have proposed an interim, but realistic, format for a discussion-focused programme of work aimed at ensuring a smooth transition of the Conference to substantive work. In the absence of an agreed programme of work, informal thematic debates have been conducted, their aim being to clarify positions on key points of the agenda of the Conference. Interesting and, in our view, very promising ideas have been expressed, and they could serve as the basis for compromise in the future.

We consider one of the priority topics to be the updated text of the draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, which is basically ready to be negotiated.

We hope to begin a review of the Conference’s methods of work. Following the completion of that review, we will, if necessary, take the necessary measures to improve the effectiveness of the work of our forum.

The delegations are exploring all possible pathways, in essence laying the foundations on which the substantive work of the Conference can recommence. The expectation is that, as soon as a programme of work is agreed, the Conference will immediately be able to proceed with negotiations without delay.

We are resolved to continue to act in the same constructive spirit in the future.

The President: I now give the floor to one of our most courageous colleagues, Ambassador Kairamo of Finland. Ambassador Kairamo is working hard on the informal working group, and we appreciate her work very much. I now have the honour, Ambassador, to give the floor to you.

Ms. Kairamo (Finland): Mr. President, first allow me to convey my warmest congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to convey my warmest thanks to our colleague from Myanmar, Ambassador Maung Wai, for his assistance during the presidency of Myanmar, in particular with regard to the role that you referred to as the Co-Chair of the informal working group on a programme of work. Before making comments on that particular issue, I would like also to congratulate Michael Møller on his role, finally, as the Secretary-General of the Conference; it is very welcome, indeed. And, of course, I am extremely happy to see Mr. Kim Won-soo here with us. Thank you very much for taking the time to come to Geneva during the first weeks in your new capacity as the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. It is very important indeed for us to have your messages clearly represented in the Conference.

Given my role as the Co-Chair of the informal working group on a programme of work, I will not go into detail on those issues. I would like to simply note that I take note of the messages of the Acting High Representative; I thank you very much for your encouraging words. I also take note of what colleagues have been expressing here today on their positions and on their views. It is obviously very clear that my Government, Finland, would also like to see the impasse disappear and that we would find the means to start working as the Conference on Disarmament properly. The statements by my Government have been expressed several times. We are willing to work on the basis of an accurate programme of work, and we are ready to do so at the earliest possible time.

I would, however, like to note in particular the reference that my colleague the Indian Ambassador made. Finland also finds that the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research plays an important role in support of this Conference by providing research and documents that are helpful and that it could even help us to move forward. That is probably the most important message I would like to convey to Mr. Kim Won-soo while he is here.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ian McConville of Australia.

Mr. McConville (Australia): Mr. President, as this is the first time I take the floor under your presidency, let me reassure you of the full support of the Australian delegation. I would also like to convey our appreciation of the work of your predecessor, Ambassador Maung Wai of Myanmar; our warm congratulations to the officially appointed Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Michael Møller; and a warm welcome to the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Kim Won-soo, who has kindly made the effort to address us here today.

Allow me to join others in bidding farewell to Ambassador Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel and also to Kelly Anderson, who has assumed the role of acting Permanent Representative of Canada to the Conference on Disarmament over the past five months. We will miss you.

On ways forward for the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. President, we welcome your positive suggestions contained in your document on planning for the Conference presidency. We think this offers a useful way forward to further elaborate on the informal discussions that we have been holding over the past few weeks. We are indeed at an impasse in this forum, but that makes these discussions and your presidency all the more important. We welcome your frank injunction to us this afternoon for us to overcome the current impasse, as well as the words from the Acting High Representative on the same issue. We know that this impasse will not be solved immediately, as it has lasted now for 19 years, but we have canvassed some interesting views in the past two weeks in the context of the informal working group. This is built on previous, even if limited, understandings arising from the previous two sittings of the informal working group co-chaired by Ambassador Gallegos of Ecuador and Ambassador Peter Woolcott of Australia. One way is to look creatively at how to make the best use of the Conference agenda, including the discussion of informal items that you have proposed in your recent correspondence. I also think we need to look at other sources of added value; and the suggestion from our United States colleague on involvement by civil society needs to be looked at seriously. In terms of the continuing role for experts, I add my voice to support the excellent work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. Australia has been fortunate to be able to provide some funding to the stability fund for the Institute in the past few weeks to help it through its current difficult financial situation, but we look forward to further efforts from all of us to make sure that this important organization is preserved and enhanced in the way it can help us in our work.

Finally, I also would like to endorse the words of the Acting High Representative in relation to leveraging off the recent consensus outcome of the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty. There is much we can take from this process, certainly in this forum, but also in ongoing work that we do at the United Nations General Assembly's First Committee.

The President: I now have the honour to give the floor to Ambassador Toshio Sano of Japan.

Mr. Sano (Japan): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of this very high post in the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of my delegation's utmost support and look forward to working under your leadership, and I thank Ambassador Maung Wai of Myanmar for his great efforts over the past four weeks.

Our delegation joins in the warm welcome to Geneva extended to Mr. Kim Won-soo and congratulates him following the announcement by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, of his appointment as the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs on 1 June of this year. The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs is an integral part of the United Nations machinery which provides limitless support for the promotion of disarmament and is, therefore, indispensable in the area of multilateral disarmament.

While congratulating you on this occasion, Mr. Kim, allow me to take this opportunity to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support. I am fully confident that under your wise guidance based on your long and rich experience, the Office will meet the tasks entrusted to it by the international community. We count on your leadership.

As you stated earlier, the Conference on Disarmament must be revitalized and undertake its important role of negotiating legal instruments. Our delegation will continue to make efforts along with other member States to overcome the Conference's long-standing stalemate.

Allow me also to congratulate and express my best wishes to Mr. Michael Møller, who has been officially appointed Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. We look forward to continuing to work with you in your esteemed post.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the French Ambassador, Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel, for his great contribution in various ways to the disarmament community in Geneva, and wish him all the best in his new assignment.

The President: I now give the floor to our colleague from Mexico, Ms. Paola Ramírez.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico): Mr. President, as this is the first time I take the floor under your presidency, please allow me to assure you of our cooperation and support. My delegation would also like to congratulate Mr. Kim Won-soo on his appointment as Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and Mr. Michael Møller on his appointment as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

Regarding the draft decision on the appointment of a special coordinator to seek views and receive proposals on the methods of work of the Conference on Disarmament, which was distributed yesterday, my delegation would like to make the following comments.

The draft proposal does not reflect all the comments and views expressed by delegations at the informal meeting held on 30 June, nor does it represent a compromise proposal as it does not request the same level of compromise from the membership. Therefore, in order to have a fair draft proposal, all suggestions and comments should be

taken into consideration. In this regard, let me reiterate the proposals made by my delegation last Tuesday.

We believe that a special coordinator could contribute to the gathering of views and proposals. But in order to have a broad panorama of the current situation, he has to be entitled to consult not just the membership of the Conference on Disarmament but also the United Nations membership and civil society representatives. In this regard, we requested that the Conference should explicitly mandate the special coordinator to consult the United Nations membership and civil society representatives. As mentioned last week, we are flexible in the language to be used when drafting this addition.

Let me reiterate that this suggestion directly responds to comments received during the presidency of my country early this year. As some members of the Conference stated that a decision regarding methods of work should include issues such as civil society participation and expansion of the membership, we believe that the opinions of the United Nations membership as a whole and of civil society representatives are fundamental.

The second proposal made referred to paragraph 2. As we believe that the work of the special coordinator should serve as a basis for improving the Conference's methods of work, my delegation attaches high importance to the fact that the report should constitute an official document of the Conference to be included in the annual report of the 2015 session of the Conference, not just in an annual Conference report, as drafted in the current version of the draft decision.

In addition to my previous comments, please allow me to make some remarks on elements included in the draft decision distributed yesterday, which were not part of the draft decision as discussed on 30 June.

Regarding paragraph 1, we believe that in order for this decision to be meaningful, the special coordinator should seek views and receive proposals on methods of work without any precondition. We understand that his task is to analyse the utility of the current methods of work and how they could be improved and to present the results of his consultations to the Conference without reservations. In this regard, we question the utility of the phrase "without prejudice to rule 18 of the rules of procedure", as we understand that in his consultations the special coordinator could discuss, among others, the full content of the Conference's rules of procedure.

Regarding paragraph 2, we request the elimination of the phrase "on the agreed outcome". The special coordinator's mandate, according to the current draft, is to seek views and receive proposals on the methods of work with a view to improved and effective functioning of the Conference, not to reach agreement on views and proposals. Therefore, the special coordinator should officially report on those views and proposals received during his consultations, nothing else.

My delegation believes that if the outcome of this initiative is to take the form of an informal report by the special coordinator or excludes views and proposals received during his consultations, this exercise will just constitute another simulation of efforts made by the Conference to get out of its impasse.

Let me reiterate that 19 years of paralysis is a vivid reminder of the fact that the Conference on Disarmament is a product of the cold war and is an organ that made major contributions in disarmament but was able to do so only when the two great Powers would agree to it. It was therefore effective during the cold war and the few honeymoon years that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The paralysis of the Conference is consequently the result not only of its own contradictions but also of the fact that it no longer represents an international community which demands inclusive participation in any debate or negotiation on ways to eliminate

weapons of mass destruction, on disarmament in general and on collective security, an international community that is no longer willing to accept the security of a few at the expense of the security of the rest.

The Conference on Disarmament is indeed a reflection of the post-war arrangements that grant to some the privilege to decide for all and where a few have enjoyed for years a de facto veto power. The path followed by our current debate regarding the appointment of a special coordinator to seek views and receive proposals on the methods of work of the Conference is an example of this forum's current inability to achieve any meaningful outcome, even for its own self-preservation.

Mr. President, my delegation would also like to make some comments regarding the plan presented for the duration of your presidency. Let me begin by reiterating that the mandate of the Conference was already expressed by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament and the Conference on Disarmament itself. There is absolutely no need to redefine it. Taking up substantive work at the Conference means to negotiate. All activities and discussions which do not constitute negotiation are not substantive work of the Conference.

In this regard, we have expressed our views on the decision adopted concerning the schedule of activities, which fully applies to the plan that you intend to follow during your presidency. The informal meetings which you propose are but another way to keep the Conference busy in the face of its inability to fulfil its mandate. As your plan is based on the addition of informal discussions, there will be no record of such discussions and, therefore, they could not even be used as a basis for negotiations. So, these informal meetings will only contribute to the simulation of work taking place in the informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work and the schedule of activities for the 2015 session.

On the understanding that the Conference on Disarmament is a forum for negotiations, discussions could contribute to the outcome of ongoing negotiations, but discussions cannot be used instead of negotiations. In this regard, if the presidency has already decided to hold discussions according to its plans, why not have them as formal meetings? In this way, at least there will be some record of them. We recall that during the Mexican presidency every single meeting was formal and we had good exchanges of views in that format.

Mr. President, let me conclude by reiterating my delegation's full support and cooperation in your current endeavours.

The President: I now give the floor to South Africa, Ms. Bronwen Levy.

Ms. Levy (South Africa): Mr. President, South Africa wishes to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish you every success in your endeavours and would like to thank you and your predecessors this year, including the Ambassador of Myanmar, for the efforts undertaken on the matter of the methods of work.

We also wish to welcome Mr. Møller's appointment and to congratulate the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and to thank him for his most inspiring address today. In taking the floor, Mr. President, we wish to specifically address the Conference on your draft decision on the appointment of a special coordinator to seek views and receive proposals on the methods of work with a view to improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. We do so taking into account your comments this afternoon as well as the Acting High Representative's comments in his address, which we believe dovetail with this decision. In considering this decision, South

Africa wishes to register its concern that some of the proposals made which garnered the support of a number of delegations do not appear in the text.

The proposals that we refer to here go beyond those put forward during our more recent informal discussions and include those made since the commencement of the 2015 Conference session, when this matter was first raised this year. This regrettably may create the impression that the views of some are more important than those of others. In raising this concern, South Africa is very much aware that members of the Conference have different priorities and concerns. However, these different priorities need not necessarily be mutually exclusive. We believe that if the membership of the Conference would show some flexibility and compromise, it should be possible for us to all work together. Indeed, this need for flexibility is precisely why, despite our reservations about the decisions on the informal working groups on the schedule of activities and the programme of work, we did not oppose consensus on the establishment of these bodies, even though we were not convinced that they would help us to make progress towards fulfilling the Conference's mandate. However, the exercise of flexibility cannot be a one-way street. Much as South Africa is flexible enough to take into account the views of those which we may disagree with, we expect to be treated in a reciprocal manner by those who may differ with us. Yet, it would seem as if some refuse to recognize the legitimate concerns of others while insisting that they themselves be shown respect and understanding. Such an approach is likely to exacerbate rather than improve the situation in the Conference.

Of particular importance for South Africa are those proposals which were linked to the need for the special coordinator to consult with the United Nations membership and civil society. We have heard those delegations who argue that the Conference's value lies in the fact that it brings together key States. In our view, however, all States and those whom they represent are in fact key. This is more especially the case when it comes to matters of international peace and security, which disarmament is intended to advance. Disarmament is not only the business of those with power, military or otherwise, it is the business of all those who seek a better and more secure world. As members of the Conference on Disarmament, we should therefore take into account the views of all States, together with members of civil society and ordinary citizens, whose voices must be heard on the Conference's inability to exercise its responsibility to negotiate. For South Africa it is actually in the exercise of this important responsibility, rather than the Conference's structure or composition, where the Conference's true value lies. We therefore believe that there is nothing in the draft decision that stops the special coordinator from taking on board these proposals. Accordingly, we expect that the special coordinator will go beyond the members of this chamber and indeed seek the views of the wider United Nations membership and civil society in compiling his report.

Also of importance to South Africa are those proposals that were made in relation to the special coordinator's report. While the reference to the Conference's annual report is welcomed, we noted that the previous version of the draft decision called upon the special coordinator to report on the outcomes of his consultations. Yet the latest version now simply restricts his report only to the agreed outcomes. For South Africa, however, if this exercise is to have any added value, we believe that all the proposals which emerged during the consultation must be included in his report and must be considered by the Conference, irrespective of whether there is agreement on them or not. Failure to do so may suggest that some are simply going through the motions and are seeking to use this decision in order to present an illusion of progress for the purposes of the United Nations General Assembly.

We, too, are concerned with the process that was embarked upon to appoint a special coordinator. In our view, the appointment of a special coordinator on any issue, along with his or her mandate, lies with you, Mr. President, and does not require explicit agreement of or a consensus decision by the Conference. In this regard, we maintain that the appointment

of a special coordinator is designed as a deadlock-breaking mechanism for the President with a view to reaching consensus so as to assist the President in situations where consensus does not in fact exist. It is for this reason that we believe that, notwithstanding the inclusion of the phrase “without prejudice to rule 18” — which is puzzling in itself, since any decision to change the consensus rule must in fact be taken by consensus — the draft decision does not prevent any delegation from raising issues related to any provision in the rules of procedure. As such, we therefore expect that the special coordinator will indeed take into account the views of those who believe that the rules of procedure, including rule 18, had seemingly been misinterpreted, used and abused by some to effectively prevent the Conference from executing its negotiating mandate. Accordingly, despite our concerns with the draft decision, given the fact that we do not believe that the appointment of a special coordinator requires a consensus decision by the Conference, we would therefore not stand in the way of its adoption. To do so would amount to undermining the very rules in the same manner as others have sought to do.

Mr. President, we have raised these concerns precisely because we want to see the Conference on Disarmament resume its rightful place. This is why we have been at the forefront together with your country and Switzerland in championing the revitalization of the work of the Conference, as reflected in General Assembly resolution 66/66 and its associated subsequent decisions. However, despite these efforts the continued failure to engage in substantive work does not allow us to be indifferent to the ongoing challenges. The continued impasse is not sustainable, and it has increasingly affected the relevance of and international confidence in the Conference. We therefore remain ready to consider any proposals that would genuinely assist in breaking the impasse. However, if the Conference continues to fail in executing its mandate, there would be no reason not to consider other options in taking forward the important work that this body has been entrusted with.

In closing, we wish to draw this chamber’s attention to an excerpt from a statement that the South African delegation delivered to the Conference in 2005, which regrettably is especially relevant to our discussions today 10 years on. In this regard, South Africa maintained that “we would do well to remind ourselves that ... it is the entire United Nations membership ... which through their assessed contributions to the United Nations budget has to foot the bill for what has now become the Conference’s continued inactivity”. All United Nations Member States therefore have a right to hold the Conference accountable for its failure to move forward on negotiations. If the Conference on Disarmament should continue its inability to commence with the required disarmament negotiations, my delegation would suggest that the time is rapidly approaching for us to consider whether it would not be more useful and cost-effective to suspend the Conference’s activities until resolutions are adopted in the General Assembly mandating the commencement of negotiations. While this would obviously not be an ideal situation for this body to find itself in, it would in our view in the interim allow the redeployment of much-needed resources to areas of great need.

The President: Thank you for your statement, which was very clear in many aspects, Madam. I now give the floor to Ambassador Akram of Pakistan.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, I congratulate you on your appointment as the President of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation’s full support for the pursuance of consensus-based and cooperative measures to advance the Conference’s agenda in a balanced and comprehensive manner. We would also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Maung Wai of Myanmar for his leadership in taking our work forward. Allow me also to welcome the appointment of Mr. Michael Møller as the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, as the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and as the Personal Representative of the

United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. He has done a brilliant job so far in his acting capacity and we wish him continued success in the times ahead.

We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence among us today of Mr. Kim Won-soo, the Acting United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and wish him all the best in his new role. His predecessor, Ms. Angela Kane, will always be fondly remembered for her great contribution and skill in responding to the various mandates signed by the member States in a balanced and objective manner.

It is also with regret that we bid farewell to our friend the Permanent Representative of France, Ambassador Simon-Michel, and we wish him every success in his future career.

Mr. President, I have asked for the floor to comment on the workplan of your presidency that you shared with the regional coordinators yesterday and also forwarded to the Conference members directly as an attachment to your letter dated 6 July 2015. The draft workplan raises two particular concerns for Pakistan — despite our discussions on this issue — which need further clarification.

First, my delegation does not understand why one of the longest-standing items on the Conference's agenda and also part of the four core issues — negative security assurances — does not appear in the workplan. The issue of negative security assurances enjoys broad support and is the one ripest for commencement of negotiations in the Conference in our view. While we understand that some nuclear-weapon States and their allies, including nuclear umbrella States, only wish to promote negative security assurances in the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones, this view is not shared by a vast majority of the Conference membership, which prefers the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference on an international convention to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the threat or use of force or nuclear weapons. Any informal discussions in the Conference on Disarmament that do not address the issue of negative security assurances on an equal footing with the other core issues would be imbalanced and partial, and not acceptable to my delegation.

Mr. President, the second point relates to your intention to devote one day and a half, on 6 and 7 August 2015, to informal discussions on the Group of Governmental Experts' report on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT). Our views on this issue are well known and were reiterated recently in a comprehensive manner during the Conference plenary on 23 June 2015 by me. I have clearly stated that Pakistan completely rejects the report of the Group of Governmental Experts and also rejects any insinuation or assertion that the report can form the basis for further consideration of the FMCT issue by the Conference on Disarmament. The Group of Governmental Experts did not function under a mandate of the Conference. The Group's members, individually or collectively, cannot arrogate to themselves the right to decide how the Conference should consider the issue of fissile material. Therefore, I want to once again make it absolutely clear that my delegation will not accept any attempt to impose the Group's report on the Conference on Disarmament, whether in a formal sense or as the basis of informal discussions in the Conference.

It is really unfortunate that despite this clear and unequivocal statement that we have made in the past, as well as my letter of 18 June addressed to the coordinator of this year's informal discussions on a fissile material treaty (FMT), the Conference is still being invited to hold informal discussions on the Group of Governmental Experts' report. There is clearly no consensus in the Conference to do so. In case there ever was any doubt, let me restate that my delegation objects in the strongest possible terms to organizing any informal or formal plenary meetings of the Conference to discuss the report of the Group of

Governmental Experts on an FMCT. The Conference President should not, and cannot, pursue any divisive approach or initiative that does not enjoy consensus.

While my delegation cannot agree to the holding of a dedicated informal Conference plenary on the FMCT Group of Governmental Experts' report, we are ready to generally discuss the FMT issue in any setting in the Conference on Disarmament; and, in any case, any delegation can raise and refer to the FMCT Group of Governmental Experts in the informal discussions, as has happened. As conveyed to you during our bilateral consultations and evidenced during the informal discussions on FMT last week and those held last year, my delegation has contributed actively and substantively to all issues on the Conference's agenda, including the ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. I assure you that we will continue to do so during your presidency under any comprehensive, balanced, non-divisive and consensus-based arrangement for informal or formal discussions.

We therefore request you to kindly amend your draft workplan accordingly by deleting any and all references to the FMCT Group of Governmental Experts' report and allocating equal time for all the four core issues, including negative security assurances. Your workplan in its present form is unacceptable for Pakistan.

Before concluding, since I have the opportunity I would like to say a few words in recognition of the statement made by the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Pakistan agrees with the elements of the statement and fully supports his call and that of the Secretary-General for efforts by this Conference to make progress and to break the deadlock that we have been in for the last almost two decades. However, I would like to make a couple of comments. One, as you can imagine, relates to the acceptance — on the basis of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts — of the Shannon mandate as a basis for negotiating an FMCT. In this context, from what I have just read it is obviously very clear where our position is on the Group of Governmental Experts' report. Our major problem is that a group of 25 countries cannot arrogate to themselves the right to decide how the Conference on Disarmament should conduct its business. Second, in this group of 25 countries not one but two nuclear-weapon States were absent. This very fact makes the outcome of the Group of Governmental Experts suspect in the extreme, because any outcome of that Group is not acceptable to my country at least.

The second issue which I found surprising and somewhat striking is that the Conference on Disarmament, which has been in a state of paralysis for almost two decades, is now suddenly being looked upon as a force to bring progress after the unsuccessful conclusion of the recently held Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. Pakistan is not a member of the NPT, and so far we have desisted from commenting on the outcome. However, I think today, when we are being asked in the Conference on Disarmament to take up the struggle for disarmament and non-proliferation and arms control from the failed NPT process, I cannot but find a similarity between the two situations. That similarity is that the failure in both forums has been as a result of policies by certain countries that are discriminatory and selective, and it is as a result of this discrimination, indeed hypocrisy, in dealing with matters of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament that we have come to this pass. It is my feeling that the Conference on Disarmament will be caught in this situation of impasse until and unless we overcome this particular difficulty. I will not comment on how the NPT will fare, because that is none of our business and concern.

The President: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for your points, and since you have raised two particular questions, I will come back to that later. I have now on my list the delegation of New Zealand, Ms. Katy Donnelly. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Donnelly (New Zealand): Mr. President, at the outset please allow me, on behalf of the New Zealand delegation, to congratulate you on assuming the role of President of the Conference on Disarmament. You have been a particularly active and supportive member of this session's group of six Presidents, and I know you will enjoy our cooperation as you seek to move the Conference inexorably closer to its as yet elusive goal. We commend, too, the work of Myanmar. We regret that the tireless efforts of the Ambassador and his dedicated team, in particular to achieve the appointment of a special coordinator on the Conference's methods of work, did not bear fruit during the Myanmar presidency. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate Michael Møller on his permanent appointment. We look forward to continuing our work with him.

It is an honour to have here today the United Nations Secretary-General's Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Kim Won-soo. There was much food for thought in his earlier remarks, and we look forward to his continued interest and engagement in this body as it struggles to shake off two decades of inertia.

We welcome this opportunity to share before the Acting High Representative some of our views on the Conference on Disarmament, and we regret only that we cannot be more optimistic about its prospects for success. It is clear from your proposed schedule of activities and from your introductory remarks, Mr. President, that the Netherlands is keen to utilize any residual capability the Conference might have to add value to international disarmament efforts. We laud your level of ambition. At this stage, however, it cannot be expected that even the extent of discussions you have planned will meet our expectations regarding the need to advance matters on this body's agenda — and I have in mind here the urgent need to make progress on nuclear disarmament. As that would suggest, though, we cannot but be pleased that you are giving us in your programme of work over the coming weeks a further opportunity to discuss effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament, as indeed called for in article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We see the debate you have scheduled on 4 August as providing additional space to consider this issue, even if we are realistic about the value of further engagement on it in the Conference.

In addition, Mr. President, we welcome your efforts to stimulate debate in the Conference on cross-cutting issues that are too often neglected here. We look forward in particular to engaging in the session you have planned on gender and disarmament on 11 August. As we have in the past, we also look forward to welcoming the students from Nagasaki high schools, a visit likely to be all the more poignant given that next month marks the seventieth anniversary of the nuclear weapon detonations in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

As a last remark, please allow me to pass on the very best wishes of New Zealand to Ambassador Simon-Michel of France on his new assignment. We will also feel very deeply the departures of many deputies over the summer, including Robert Jackson from Ireland, Kelly Anderson from Canada and Jyri Järviäho from Finland. They all have what we call in New Zealand *mana*, a powerful mix of prestige, based not only on rank but also on exceptional personal ability. They will all be missed. In saying these words of farewell, I know, too, my Ambassador would also wish to join me in sending her best wishes as well, and only the need for her to be at the preparatory meeting on the Arms Trade Treaty today has stopped her being here to say so personally.

The President: Thank you very much for your kind words and statement. I now give the floor to Ambassador Young-jip Ahn of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ahn Young-jip (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, as this is my first time taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to join other delegations in congratulating you on your assumption of this important responsibility. I am confident that under your able leadership, we will be able to address very complex and difficult issues that

the Conference on Disarmament is faced with. I wish you every success in carrying out your work, and I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation throughout your tenure. I would also like to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Maung Wai of Myanmar, for his superb work over the past four weeks.

Today we heard from the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations, Mr. Kim Won-soo, and, very briefly, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt welcome to him for his first visit to this august body. As Mr. Kim mentioned in his statement, the Conference is urgently called upon to restart negotiation as a matter of priority. We need to take this as a solemn call to redouble our efforts to revitalize the Conference.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to Mr. Michael Møller, although he is now absent, for his recent appointment as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. It is our wish that this series of appointments will serve as opportunities to change the dynamics of the current climate in the field of disarmament and have a positive impact on the United Nations disarmament machinery as a whole.

Mr. President, my delegation actively participated in the structured informal discussions this year under the able coordination of Ambassador Ramadan of Egypt and Ambassador Biontino of Germany. We made our position very clear during the discussion that our priority is to start negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We also appreciate the superb work of Ambassador Kairamo of Finland in the informal working group on the programme of work and hope that there will be a meaningful result based on our discussions. Although this will be decided tomorrow, my delegation would like to express our support for the draft decision on the appointment of a special coordinator with a mandate to seek views and receive proposals on the methods of work for the improved and effective functioning of the Conference.

Last but not least, I would like to commend Ambassador Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel for his valuable wisdom and contribution to the Conference and wish him all the best in his new assignment as French Ambassador to Guatemala. We will also miss Ms. Kelly Anderson of Canada for her contribution to the Conference on Disarmament and her wide experience and affection; we wish her all the best in her new assignment.

The President: I now have the honour to give the floor to Ambassador Ferden Çarıkçı of Turkey.

Mr. Çarıkçı (Turkey): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You can count on my delegation's full support. I wish also to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Myanmar. I also would like to congratulate the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Kim Won-soo, and wish him success in his endeavours. Additional heartfelt congratulations are due to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Michael Møller, who has just been appointed as the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. I thank him for his continuing engagement with the Conference and wish him every success.

In order to address today's challenges and enhance our security in a volatile environment, multilateral efforts towards disarmament are indispensable. Our ability to respond effectively to the pressing challenges to international peace and security depends heavily on how we make the best use of international forums, including the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference has a special responsibility regarding the disarmament agenda and it has a considerable heritage. In the past, it has successfully negotiated treaties that

contributed to a safer and more peaceful world. The stark truth is that the Conference has been unable to fulfil its mandate for too long. We should strive to maintain the relevance of the Conference by having it fulfil its fundamental task, that is, to undertake disarmament negotiations. The Conference's agenda is comprehensive and flexible, enabling us to address all issues in the field of arms control and disarmament. Turkey would not like to see the Conference's role be shifted away. In this regard, we hope that the Conference will resume substantive work as early as possible.

In our view, the recent informal discussion in the framework of the informal working group on the programme of work is an important attestation to our collective endeavours to find a way that would command consensus. An essential step in this respect will be the commencement of negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and universally and effectively verifiable treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. This will serve both disarmament and non-proliferation purposes. It will further pave the way for parallel advances on the other core agenda items. We welcome, in this respect, the consensus report of the Group of Governmental Experts on this issue. We hope that the report will help us to understand this technically complex and multifaceted issue better and more in depth.

Regarding the state of affairs in the Conference, Turkey is convinced that the challenges are not created by its procedures, membership or internal dynamics, and the consensus rule is paramount in this regard. So we have to study carefully the state of affairs. Unfortunately, there is a certain malaise throughout the disarmament forums and machinery, at both the international and regional levels. In our understanding, the stalemate in the Conference is a reflection of the strategic bottlenecks at different yet interrelated levels. The work of the Conference cannot be evaluated in abstraction from the rest of disarmament efforts. But we also have to assess whether a deadlock in the Conference or its healthy functioning serves us better. We should not allow past failures to deter us. There are challenges, but we need to strive to overcome the current impasse.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador Vinicio Mati of Italy.

Mr. Mati (Italy): Mr. President, let me first of all join the previous speakers in congratulating you on the assumption of this important responsibility and express my best wishes for a successful outcome of the Dutch presidency. I am sure that under your guidance we will be able to have fruitful discussions, and I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support.

We also welcome the appointment of Mr. Michael Møller as Secretary-General of the Conference, and we will continue to rely on his invaluable contribution to our work. At the same time, I would also like to welcome the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Mr. Kim Won-soo. We truly appreciate his decision to come to Geneva and to address the Conference on Disarmament on this occasion. Many thanks also go to Ambassador Maung Wai for his constructive efforts to allow the Conference to carry on its activities.

We believe that effective multilateralism has made the contribution of the United Nations disarmament machinery crucial in the field of disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament remains the sole forum established and specifically devoted to negotiate multilateral treaties in this field. Therefore, from our perspective it is of the utmost importance to preserve its primary role in promoting substantive negotiations related to disarmament and non-proliferation and to overcome its current deadlock.

We share the concern about the situation, and we are deeply convinced that resuming our substantive work within the Conference and relaunching its role is imperative. The finalization of a programme of work is an essential goal which we need to pursue tirelessly. In this regard, Italy shares the need to advance with an open mind and a

constructive spirit on all the core items of the agenda. Among these items our priority remains the early commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material in line with the decision recorded in document CD/1864, in accordance with action 15 of the action plan agreed at the 2010 Review Conference of the parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and in the light of the recent Group of Governmental Experts' report. To this end, we strongly support the activities of the newly re-established informal working group on the programme of work and we commend the efforts deployed by Ambassador Päivi Kairamo in her capacity as Co-Chair of this group.

Many ideas have been raised in the framework of this informal working group. They bear witness to the genuine will of member States to allow the Conference to immediately commence negotiations to advance disarmament goals through the adoption of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. Italy stands ready to evaluate any constructive proposal aimed at providing us with fresh impetus and to support innovative solutions in order to relaunch the role of the Conference. In this vein, we also welcome increasing involvement by technical experts in our discussions, and we commend the Dutch presidency for having envisaged the participation of some experts in the formal discussions planned in the framework of the Conference's schedule of activities, notably on the topic of the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Before concluding, let me reiterate that, in our view, no effort should be spared in order to put the Conference on Disarmament back on track and to allow it to fully play its role. In this vein, we stand ready to support any future attempt to discuss the methods of work of the Conference with a view to making it more effective. In this regard, we strongly support the adoption of the decision on the appointment of a special coordinator to seek views and receive proposals on the methods of work in the person of the Swiss Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Urs Schmid, and we would like to assure him, once hopefully appointed, of the full and unconditional support of the Italian delegation.

(spoke in French)

Lastly, allow me to say a word on the departure of Ambassador Simon-Michel, who is an excellent friend and a truly remarkable partner. He will be greatly missed and I would like to take this opportunity to wish him all the best and every success in his next role.

The President: I give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Mr. President, let me congratulate you on the assumption of your role. As you know, you have my delegation's full support.

We welcome the initiative you have taken, as set out in your letter dated 6 July. We do not believe that the plenary sessions you propose are necessarily governed by rules 6 and 7 of the rules of procedure, the rules concerning the conduct of work and the organization of work, as we have not agreed a programme of work which would see work commence. In fact, decisions that have been agreed this year have been with a view to get back to substantive work, and, as commented by another delegation, what we are doing now does not equate to substantive work.

Now, we could of course spend the plenary sessions listening to each other's optimistic statements on arrival and somewhat less optimistic speeches on departure, sprinkled here and there with set-piece statements, or we could have a more useful exchange of views on the items on our agenda about the one thing we have agreed this year. That would be easier to do if it was indicated when we might discuss a particular topic, not least because it allows preparation and, in the most optimistic of scenarios, some discussion between sessions. Under rule 30, any member State can raise any subject relevant to the

work of the Conference at a plenary. All you have done is indicate when you would choose to raise such subjects.

I am uncertain about the link between the Group of Governmental Experts and the failure of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to agree a consensus outcome, as set out by our Pakistani colleague. The 2010 Review Conference was a success in that it agreed a consensus outcome. That outcome directed a number of actions at the Conference on Disarmament, and foremost among them was the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT). Pakistan blocked progress on such negotiation in 2010, just as it blocked progress on negotiation on an FMCT this year. I also find the comments of Pakistan on the composition of the FMCT Group of Governmental Experts somewhat disingenuous. It is well known that Pakistan declined the opportunity to participate in the Group of Governmental Experts and so have its reviews reflected in the Group's report, as has been done faithfully for every governmental expert that did participate.

Finally, let me add my voice to those who have bid farewell to Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel. He will indeed be missed.

The President: I now have Canada on my list. Kelly, you have the floor.

Ms. Anderson (Canada): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on assuming your role of President of the Conference on Disarmament. You have, as I am sure you are aware, our full support.

We welcome your proposed agenda for the coming month and agree with the United Kingdom interpretation of the Conference's rules of procedure. Indeed, we have heard much discussion in this room about the rule of consensus, including today. Our views on this issue are well known, and we strongly question the use of consensus as a veto power to block the ability of this body to return to work. In this context, it is disturbing to this delegation that consensus is now being used to seek to question the prerogative of the President to set an agenda for us to discuss informally in this body. If we must now have consensus before any discussion takes place in the Conference, we are truly nailing the final nails in the Conference's coffin.

Mr. President, as I have said, my delegation welcomes the proposal to hold informal discussions on the topics you have proposed and would welcome others, including negative security assurances. We welcome discussion of document CD/2023, containing the report of the Group of Governmental Experts, and also very much welcome your proposal to discuss gender and disarmament.

With regard to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts, it was never intended to supplant the Conference on Disarmament but to assist this body by examining elements of the future treaty, which the Group itself noted should be negotiated within the Conference. We believe discussion on this report can assist the Conference to make progress on a future treaty which would ban the production of the very materials used to create nuclear weapons. Despite having led the process that resulted in the consensus report, we do not view this document or any document considered by this body to be sacrosanct. Its findings are open to challenge and even to direct opposition, but ultimately it must be open to debate, and that debate is, as many delegations have repeated regularly, most appropriate here in the Conference.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador Wood of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to take the floor a second time. I wish to echo the comments of my British and Canadian counterparts — and colleagues — about the rules of procedure of this body.

As I mentioned in a previous statement at the Conference on Disarmament, my delegation looks forward to a fulsome discussion in the Conference of the Group of Governmental Experts' report on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The report is clearly germane to the work of the Conference, and there should be no fear in discussing it. Let me also reiterate my delegation's full support for your important ambitious programme during your presidency.

My last point is about why this body has been unable to negotiate such a treaty. It is very clear we all know why. An attempt to blame other countries for why we are not able to move forward in the Conference is unfortunate and without foundation.

Mr. President: I now give the floor to the Russian Federation. Mr. Deyneko, you have the floor.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It will be necessary for me to go back to the beginning of the session to understand some things more clearly. It is a shame that the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs has left us, as he might have a one-sided view of what is happening with the draft decision on the appointment of a special coordinator on the Conference's methods of work.

Here is what happened: right at the very beginning, when this issue was first placed on the agenda for discussion, we proposed not to rush but to work properly and not too quickly. We proposed to begin by defining the concept of "methods of work". This was rejected, and by the presidency, no less, whose representative was today so indignant over the draft decision prepared by you and the previous presidency, I expect, in consultation with a wide range of delegations, unlike how some decisions were prepared at the beginning of the year. This is something that I would rather not recall and still less have serve as a precedent.

Secondly, when the issue of an informal working group on methods of work arose, we proposed the same approach, since the majority of delegations did not wish to discuss in detail what methods of work are. We showed flexibility and proposed another option: to limit the mandate of the working group, clearly specifying that the consensus rule was not up for discussion. Why the consensus rule in particular? The Conference on Disarmament differs from the First Committee of the General Assembly in three important respects: consensus is one of them; the second is a more limited membership; and the third is the negotiating mandate.

You must all understand and, I hope, do understand that, if we take away two of these pillars — that is, if we, firstly, replace the consensus rule with the majority voting rule of the General Assembly and, secondly, expand the membership of the Conference to match that of the United Nations — then the negotiating mandate will be all that we have left, although it no longer plays a distinctive role, since, as we know, the General Assembly can establish negotiating organs by resolution. The Arms Trade Treaty is the most recent and striking example. But the question again arises: are the agreements negotiated at the open forum of the General Assembly capable of becoming universal? Could they, for example, become as universal as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which was drawn up not by the United Nations, but by the forerunner of the Conference on Disarmament, and is at present the most universal international legal instrument?

Next, as far as methods of work are concerned, consultations among delegations are one of the diplomatic methods of work. It is no secret who amended the draft prepared by the Dutch presidency. But I will let you in on a little secret: neither the delegation of Mexico nor that of South Africa came to consult with us. They prefer megaphone diplomacy — right here, in this room, at plenary meetings, and with great emotion, too; they do not use all the methods and forms of diplomatic work.

Thirdly, the informal consultations and thematic discussions that we conduct are clearly in line with the rules of procedure of the Conference. Show me where it stipulates that special decisions must be taken on the matter. The Conference can take decisions, but it is the same form of work. I do not dispute that the mandate of the Conference is to conduct negotiations, but no one abolished informal events: they are entirely permissible.

Now, a more specific point. Someone said that the special coordinator would be restricted in his or her ability to conduct consultations with a wide range of States, and someone else mentioned non-governmental organizations. Read the draft decision carefully and, if you find any restriction, please let me know, we will discuss it. In any case, reading the document, I found no mention of the special coordinator being restricted only to negotiations with full members of the Conference. That is the first thing.

As to the agreed outcome to be reported to the Conference and included in its annual report to the General Assembly, it is the Russian delegation's firm, consistent and unshakeable conviction that we have had enough disagreements and contradictions and that we do not need any new ones on either important or subsidiary issues of the work of the Conference.

One final point: following the logic of those of our colleagues who are inclined to waves of emotion and criticism, they should voluntarily have declined to participate in the Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as a few others did, because it was an extremely restricted format and the interests of many States even on matters concerning their security were not represented. It is all a little inconsistent.

The President: I have two more delegations on my list, but in fact there are three speakers. I will give the floor to the first two in a moment, but I would very kindly ask both of them to be as brief as possible in view of the reason why we have the third speaker. The third speaker is our colleague Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel. We are a little bit under time pressure. To be very frank with you, Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel was at the top of the list, but I asked him whether he would agree to be at the end of the list, so that we first could have the debate and then give some attention to his departure. He kindly agreed to that. I therefore call on our colleagues from Belarus and Pakistan to make a short statement in order to give full attention to the departure of Ambassador Simon-Michel. I, of course, do not want to cut off the debate. As to the decision, we have another session tomorrow, so we can continue then. For now, I would appreciate if we could keep it short, if that is acceptable to you. I hope you understand the reason why I am doing that: it is not because I want to cut off the discussion. I will now first give the floor to our colleague from Belarus and then I will give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. Grinevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, as we are speaking for the first time under your presidency, allow us to wish you the very best. You can count on the full support of our delegation in your work as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

Our delegation had not intended to take the floor, but some of the comments made by our colleagues demand a reaction. First, with regard to the evaluation made of the impasse at the Conference, we take an extremely flexible position, as you know, and would like to reiterate that we are prepared to support the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), the prevention of an arms race in outer space, negative security assurances and nuclear disarmament, but we see that the key issues are blocked.

In this connection, the repeated assertions made by certain delegations that an FMCT is the next logical step towards the commencement of negotiations are slightly misplaced, since, if we study this logic carefully, it means that when the commencement of

a particular negotiation process does not succeed, then the Conference, and first and foremost the States parties to the Conference, following this logic, should in fact determine which issue can be the next to be negotiated. In this regard, we sincerely support the work of the Co-Chair of the informal working group on a programme of work, Ambassador Päivi Kairamo, and believe that it has made a great contribution to the search for consensus.

I would now like to respond to the statements made by certain delegations regarding their disagreement with your proposed draft decision on the appointment of a special coordinator on methods of work. First, we stress that our delegation is prepared to join a consensus and support your proposed document, which was distributed yesterday. However, in the event consensus on the issue proves impossible, we would like to repeat a proposal that we had made previously during informal consultations, and here the draft decision would be elegant and simple.

You, Mr. President, would be mandated to hold one or two plenary meetings on the methods of work of the Conference — that would be the first point of the decision. The second point: the outcomes of this or these plenary meetings would be reflected in verbatim records at the end of these plenary meetings. We would thereby respect the delegations' wish to conduct a detailed discussion of the issue and, on the other hand, avoid unnecessary manipulations with the preparation of some kind of special coordinator's report, since the verbatim records are also documents of the Conference and can therefore be submitted to the General Assembly. That is our very elegant proposal. We would thus bring the topic to a close and avoid provoking open confrontation with one another.

One more point on the proposals to end the impasse at the Conference: we believe that, if there were no Conference on Disarmament, we would have to create one, and we sincerely ask everyone to have patience, since one of the essential, simply essential, and vital characteristics of diplomacy and diplomats is to work patiently and determinedly to reach an agreement both with one another and between all parties. Please excuse me if I have spoken for too long.

The President: I think that was very much within the time, so thank you for that. I appreciate that very much, and I would request the Ambassador of Pakistan, who has the floor now, to do the same.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I will be extremely brief. I had no intention of taking the floor again, but I need to respond to my worthy colleagues, the Permanent Representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom.

I think there is a misunderstanding on their part of our rules of procedure. A careful study of the rules of procedure — rule 18 — states very clearly that the Conference shall conduct its work and adopt its decisions by consensus. In describing the organization of work, rule 19 says the work of the Conference shall be conducted in plenary meetings, as well as under any additional arrangements agreed by the Conference, such as informal meetings with or without experts. So, the work as defined in rule 19 has to be conducted on the basis of consensus. That is the first point.

Secondly, my colleague the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom referred to rule 30. I will read out rule 30: "The subject of statements made in plenary meetings will normally correspond to the topic then under discussion in accordance with the agreed programme of work. However, it is the right of any member State of the Conference to raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference at a plenary meeting and to have full opportunity of presenting its views on any subject which it may consider to merit attention." That is precisely what I said in my statement: that any delegation can raise the report of the Group of Governmental Experts in its statement. What I objected to is that it is not for the President to prejudge and bring into discussion a document which is not a document of the Conference on Disarmament. If it were such, then why can we not, when

we are discussing the prevention of an arms race in outer space under your programme, have as a document of reference the Russian and Chinese draft treaty? Or — well, negative security assurances do not even figure, but I hope that you will put them in there, and if you do put them in there, then why can we not discuss the draft treaty text of Pakistan on negative security assurances? That is the point: it is not for the President but for individual delegations to bring in those subjects that they would wish to stress. That is the first point.

Second point, I think I was not heard properly. I did not equate the Group of Governmental Experts with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). I very clearly said that I want to respond to two aspects of what was stated by the Acting High Representative of the Secretary-General on Disarmament. One was his comment regarding the Group of Governmental Experts, and the second was that the Conference on Disarmament should now take up the work of the failed NPT Review Conference. So, there were two separate issues to which I had referred, and I did not equate the two.

The third point: we can also play the blame game. It is well known that my country has objected to negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT), and we have stated our reasons for doing so. I can assure you that as long as our security concerns are undermined by such negotiations, we will continue to block these negotiations until hell freezes over. We, too, can play the blame game by asking countries why they are blocking negotiations on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, on negative security assurances and nuclear disarmament, but they simply do not have the courage to come up and tell us why they are blocking these negotiations.

Finally, Mr. President, we are ready to work with you to discuss all issues, including an FMCT, but we ask that you as the President, in keeping with the discussion that I had with you, must play the role of the President. You are the President for all of us, not just for those countries who are part and parcel of the Group of Governmental Experts on an FMCT.

The President: First of all, I think there is a misunderstanding indeed, because you referred in your statement to the so-called workplan. What I sent around is not a workplan. What you see in the letter is a planning of a number of activities — you see that also at the top of the list where the different dates are indicated.

Secondly, we tried — and that is what I addressed when we had our bilateral discussion — precisely, and I fully agree with you there, to take all things into account: that we indeed have a discussion on nuclear disarmament, that we have a discussion on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and that we have a discussion on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT). Why not on negative security assurances? Is it because we are against that? No, it is because of the fact that during our presidency we have had discussions under nuclear disarmament, we have partly had discussions on an FMCT, and we will have discussions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Discussions on negative security assurances in the schedule of activities are foreseen under the New Zealand presidency. We said in our letter that we will build on our discussions under the schedule of activities so far, and that is the reason why we took those three. In the same letter, it is very clearly stated that everything depends on your input. If the feeling is that we should have discussions on negative security assurances before we have the discussion on the schedule of activities, that is absolutely fine with me: we can have it, and I would highly appreciate substantive input from the delegation of Pakistan. You are most welcome. I have no problem with changing that in addition. However, that is the reason why we took those three, and I tried to be as substantive as possible.

As to the different experts, I have asked — and Mr. Deyneko can confirm this — that we have Mr. Vasiliev, who was the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on the

prevention of an arms race in outer space, speak to us under this discussion and any further discussion. I refer also to the statement made by the Ambassador of China: we can have that, we are completely open to that. If you want it, please let me know and we will put it in.

With your agreement, I would like to stop there and, with apologies, give the floor to Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel.

Mr. Simon-Michel (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like, first of all, to offer my warmest congratulations to my colleague and friend Henk Cor van der Kwast as he assumes the position of President of the Conference on Disarmament and as I prepare to leave Geneva. I wish him every success.

I wish also to commend Ambassador Maung Wai of Myanmar, the outgoing President, and thank him for his efforts. I welcome to Geneva Mr. Kim Won-soo, the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and congratulate him on his recent appointment. Lastly, I congratulate Mr. Michael Møller on his permanent appointment as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. In truth, after his long spell as Acting Secretary-General, it is a role that we already considered to be his.

Mr. President, as some take up new duties, others leave theirs. I have asked for the floor to bid farewell to the Conference and to the disarmament community. After three and a half years in Geneva and more than eight devoted to strategic affairs and disarmament, I leave feeling genuinely emotional.

Despite differences in our personalities and in the positions adopted by our countries, I strongly believe that we are a community in which esteem, respect and the quality of the relationships among colleagues make it possible to overcome many challenges.

I also leave with a sense that these years have been particularly rich and eventful. Since I arrived, on 1 February 2012, I have been fortunate enough to negotiate two treaties and to see my country sign and ratify both. That does not happen very often in the career of a diplomat.

The first — the Arms Trade Treaty — is a pioneering instrument that I believe marks a historic turning point. The second, which has a regional focus, is the Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. Though undoubtedly narrower in scope, it is a tangible step forward in the implementation of the 2010 action plan for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Also in the nuclear field, I had the opportunity to participate in the Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT). I and 24 other experts managed to adopt, by consensus, a very substantial report last April. It is a major achievement with regard to disarmament in Geneva. My country sought to build on that momentum a few days later by submitting an ambitious draft FMCT to the Conference on Disarmament.

Staying in the nuclear field, I was lucky enough to contribute to the collective efforts of the five permanent members of the Security Council to further the implementation of the 2010 NPT action plan. I had the honour, in particular, of leading the small working group responsible for drafting a common information disclosure form. What may appear to be technical work is in reality sensitive and fundamental.

Regarding treaties, I had the great honour of chairing the 2013 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and of launching a process concerning a topic that remains to be explored, namely lethal autonomous weapons systems, for which the High Contracting Parties tasked me with organizing a first meeting of experts in 2014.

I am pleased to be leaving Geneva with the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons on the right track, 15 months prior to the Review Conference. The lethal autonomous weapons systems process must continue to advance, but so too must the process on improvised explosive devices, which have now sadly become one of the deadliest weapons. Lastly, there is a need to pursue efforts to universalize the Convention: the last three years have seen some significant accessions, for which I salute the States involved. To me, that is a result of the new dynamics of the Convention.

And, of course, there is the Conference on Disarmament, which I had the honour of chairing exactly three years ago, during the same period as you, Mr. President. It goes without saying that no one can be entirely satisfied with the current situation, but there is no point in painting an even gloomier picture, in denigrating the institution or in ignoring existing efforts.

Naturally, I regret that we have not yet been able to start formal negotiations on an FMCT, which represents a commitment made by all States parties to the NPT under action 15 of the 2010 action plan. The fact nonetheless remains that the in-depth discussions on an FMCT that we held last year and this year, including last Thursday, echoing the work carried out by the Group of Governmental Experts, enable progress to be made.

In order to reconcile different points of view, one first of all has to discuss them. There is a fine line between negotiations and discussions. One cannot have the former without the latter. One cannot negotiate without having first discussed. I think that in no other forum in the disarmament machinery could one have the discussion that we held last Thursday, in particular, under the presidency of my neighbour, Michael Biontino, and with all stakeholders, on the subject of an FMCT.

We must redouble our efforts and move up a gear. No one aspires to that more than me. That is the objective of the informal working group chaired by our Finnish colleague, Päivi Kairamo. We must also look at our working methods. While it is true that they are only part of the problem, it is the part that depends on us and us alone, so we must do everything in our power to move forward.

As to the NPT, the outcome of the recent Review Conference is disappointing, but we still have the 2010 action plan, which was adopted by consensus. That action plan was not designed to last only five years. It represents a longer-term ambition; it is a road map that is as relevant now as ever.

On a more general note, it is important to search for what can unite us. Progress towards disarmament cannot be made in a spirit of division. Initiatives that aim to stigmatize and condemn, that are rooted in an ideological or moral standpoint, or that, with a degree of bad faith, demand everything immediately and unconditionally, cannot foster progress towards disarmament. They can only exacerbate divisions, blockages and asymmetries.

When we are confronted with very different perspectives, the role of the secretariat and of international civil servants is, I believe, to do everything possible to pacify the debate and to build bridges. This requires a lot of impartiality and not taking sides.

Disarmament is one of the tools that should help to strengthen peace and security. It is neither an end in itself nor a panacea. As one would expect, it moves forward faster during times of calm and tends to stall when international relations become strained. We must avoid that. It is not in denying the realities of the world in the name of abstract idealism that we will make progress towards disarmament, but in looking at the world as it is.

If we show pragmatism and willingness and make an effort to move forward as one, I am convinced that considerable progress can be made in the coming years. That, dear colleagues, is what I wish for all of you.

The President: Thank you very much, Jean-Hugues.

I would like to end the debate here and invite you to a meeting at 3 p.m. tomorrow here in this room, as announced.

We now have a reception in honour of Mr. Kim Won-soo. I would like to ask you, however, if you have five minutes when we end this meeting, to stay in the room. I have one more thing to cover, but I formally adjourn this meeting now.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.