

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 15 September 2015, at 10.05 a.m.

*President:* Ms. Dell Higgie .....(New Zealand)

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**The President:** I call to order the 1369th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I wish to express appreciation to the coordinators appointed under the schedule of activities established by the decision contained in document CD/2021, whose reports were presented during the informal meeting of the Conference yesterday afternoon. As provided for in document CD/2021, and as we foreshadowed at the meeting yesterday, the New Zealand presidency has now written to the secretariat requesting the formal circulation of all the reports to Conference members. Once that letter has been circulated with the reports, there will be an opportunity provided at the next formal meeting of the Conference for any delegations that wish to make comments on the record about them.

You will now all have received the amendments to the draft report of the Conference which were issued as document CD/WP.591/Amend.2 (in English only) and which we distributed into your inboxes last Friday. I have also asked the secretariat to circulate a scanned copy of the document at the same time, so I hope you all received that as well.

Following this morning's formal meeting of the plenary, we will move to an informal session to discuss the amendments to the report. Any delegations that wish to have their comments noted on the formal record of the Conference at this point, however, should add their names to the list of speakers for this meeting of the plenary. That said, I have a number of delegations that have already requested the floor to speak in the formal meeting. As was mentioned at the 1368th meeting, I am most pleased to welcome Ambassador Karel van Oosterom, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations in New York and Chair-designate of the First Committee at the seventieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. As has been done in the past, the Chair-designate will address the Conference on Disarmament this morning. Ambassador Van Oosterom, welcome, and you have the floor.

**Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands):** Thank you very much, Madam President. Sitting here, I realized that New Zealand and the Kingdom of the Netherlands are geographically the farthest apart — at least from a Dutch perspective — and there is some symbolism in that because in the United Nations we are neighbours. The Netherlands and New Zealand sit next to each other in the General Assembly, and the symbolism there is that we can connect any distance in the world and be very close. So thank you very much for making it possible for us to speak here today. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a firm proponent of multilateral diplomacy and of the international legal order, and we have a firm tradition supporting disarmament and international security efforts. Therefore, when the possibility to chair the First Committee came up, my Ministry immediately said: You have to do this. It is a great honour for us to have been elected as such and to serve in October as Chair of the First Committee. It also puts into practice the mission statement of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which is “your partner for peace, justice and development”.

My task as Chair will be to facilitate the work of the First Committee as effectively and efficiently as possible, in an inclusive, neutral and transparent manner. While I may be Dutch in who I am, and I will be Dutch in my heart, as Chair I will be neutral, inclusive and transparent. I will make a disconnect. My visit to Geneva yesterday and today is essential in my preparations for the upcoming First Committee. We see a direct link between the work of the Conference on Disarmament and the First Committee. And as we all know, many First Committee resolutions request action by the Conference. As I said yesterday to some of you, diplomacy is about making connections, and with my visit I have tried to establish a connection between New York and Geneva, between the First Committee and the Conference, and certainly also with many of the colleagues here also present today. I am very happy to see that, even after one day, I already recognize many faces, and I am looking forward to greeting in New York those of you who will be going there. It is also about making a connection in a more practical sense between the Chair and the membership.

As I have indicated, the Bureau and the contact persons per regional group in the Bureau will be key in establishing an operational connection between the work of the Chair and the wider membership.

It was very useful yesterday to hear from many of you straight from the source what your priorities will be in October. I hope that I have been able to explain the priorities we see for the chairing of the Committee, which, in essence, also will be very important when it comes to procedural issues and certainly also to time management.

When it comes to substance, the Conference on Disarmament is an important part of the disarmament machinery. It is important to have a discussion on the improvement of the disarmament machinery also in New York and, in this regard, it is also important to look at the role of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. It was of great importance for me to hear your views and advice, which will be instrumental in enabling me to fulfil my duties as Chair. To be complete, yesterday I spoke to the Group of 21 here, to the Mason group and to the European Union. As I also indicated to many of you yesterday, it is absolutely crucial for those of you who facilitate resolutions to start on that, if I may give that advice, as soon as possible. Initiate contacts and make sure to do that before the deadline of 20 October. Many of you indicated a keen interest in what others are doing when it comes to resolutions, and I can only reiterate: start your consultations and make clear that you build support among the others, so that you are ready in time.

Furthermore, I have listened to many of you with concrete suggestions for the meeting in October. Some questions have been asked, and some of those I will take back to the Bureau and discuss them with my colleagues in the Bureau. As to the joint session with the Fourth Committee, I will also discuss that next week with the Chair of the Fourth Committee for this joint session on outer space.

Furthermore, I have heard some suggestions for improving communication through the Bureau. I will discuss that with the Bureau as well to see how we can enhance communication on procedural issues, and we will communicate later on how we are going to do that. I feel encouraged that I have heard from many of you strong support for the working method elements I introduced yesterday, especially with regard to the need for strict time management and the need for statements to be concluded in the allotted time slot. And as the Chair of the First Committee, I will do my utmost to safeguard the collective interest — the interest of all of us — and to make sure that on the day that speakers have prepared a statement, they will be able to deliver it. Many of you have told me how important it is that we be able to conclude our work at the latest on 6 November. There is also a personal interest, because to rebook all these tickets on the weekend afterwards would be very inconvenient: so that is, I think, a common interest many of us have, and certainly with the colleagues from Geneva who will be coming to New York.

I look forward to working with you in October and the beginning of November. What I value is the quality of the discussion on substance I enjoyed listening to yesterday with many of you, and I look forward to hearing that kind of discussion also during the First Committee. I hope, and I am confident, that I will be able to count on all of you to make the discussions and deliberations of the First Committee as constructive and positive as possible. Coming here yesterday, I realized how important the coming session of the First Committee is from a more global perspective. Looking to the coming period, it is a very important period coming up. In two weeks' time we will have the summit on the sustainable development goals and the sustainable development agenda: that is really going to move the development agenda forward. In Paris, we will have the meeting on countering climate change, and we really hope that there we will move the agenda forward when it comes to countering climate change. I express the hope that, thanks to the efforts of all of us and certainly of you, the member States, it will be possible to advance the disarmament and international security agenda during the First Committee session. In the Netherlands we

say: *L'unité fait la force*. Unity makes strength. I hope that with good collaboration and cooperation among all of us, and through good personal connections, between all the member States and representatives of the member States, we will be able to have a very positive and successful session of the First Committee in October and the beginning of November.

**The President:** I thank the Chair-designate of the First Committee for coming to re-establish and confirm the linkage between New York and Geneva, and thank you also for accentuating the symbolism represented by the antipodean countries of New Zealand and the Netherlands sitting so close together in the United Nations. I am sure I speak for everybody here in wishing you all the very best, and certainly all delegations, I know, will be giving you their full support. We wish you well in your endeavours, Ambassador Van Oosterom.

I will now turn to the list of speakers for today. The following delegations have requested to take the floor: Cuba, followed by the Russian Federation, followed by China. I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba, Ambassador Rodríguez Camejo.

**Ms. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba)** (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to wish you, Madam President, every success in your role as President of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you that you enjoy the support of our delegation. We would also like to express our endorsement of the statements made so far by the Group of 21 at the Conference.

Madam President, it is unacceptable that 70 years after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the international community continues to live under the threat of nuclear weapons. The total elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons is a matter of survival for humanity and the highest priority in the field of disarmament. The use, whether intentional or not, of even a miniscule part of the enormous global nuclear arsenal would cause a nuclear winter with untold humanitarian consequences and the annihilation of the human race. Defence doctrines based on so-called nuclear deterrence are unacceptable.

At the beginning of 2015, there were still some 15,850 nuclear weapons in existence, of which 4,300 were deployed with armed forces. Around 1,800 of these weapons are kept in high-alert operational status. While tens of millions of human beings silently die, the victims of poverty and preventable or curable diseases, some 1.8 trillion dollars are being poured into military spending to wage modern-day wars of conquest, which cost thousands of lives.

Meanwhile, the Conference on Disarmament continues to fail to carry out its mandate as the sole multilateral forum for the negotiation of treaties on disarmament; and it is failing in particular in terms of nuclear disarmament, which was considered a priority in 1978 at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

We deeply regret that substantive work has not been carried out by the Conference for almost 20 years and are convinced that this impasse is due to a lack of political will on the part of some States to make real progress, in particular in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. The failure of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to agree on a consensus-based final document — due to opposition by three countries to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East — reflects the seriousness of the situation, witnessed as well by the feeble content of the paragraph on nuclear disarmament contained in the draft text which was unable to command consensus at the conference.

We reaffirm that all States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty must abide by the legally binding obligations of that instrument. The effective implementation of article VI of the Treaty requires States to undertake more precise and measurable actions within specific time frames.

Cuba will continue to call for States to undertake concrete actions in the multilateral sphere to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. As an active member of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, we support the proposal contained in General Assembly resolution 69/58, in which the Assembly called for the urgent commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction. That notwithstanding, until nuclear weapons are totally eradicated, it is urgent that an agreement be reached on a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to provide a guarantee to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of such weapons against them.

Unilateral declarations and voluntary pledges as proposed by some States — even when subjected to verification — are, in and of themselves, not enough. Let us recall the historic high-level meeting of the General Assembly held for the first time ever on the topic of nuclear disarmament, in 2013, and the significance of commemorating the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on 26 September every year. In addition, we reaffirm that all members of the Conference should commit to ensuring the success of the United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament, which is to take place at the latest in 2018.

A further important step on the path to achieving disarmament was taken at the second summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held in Havana in January 2014, when the Latin American and Caribbean region was formally proclaimed a zone of peace. In the declaration, the firm commitment of CELAC members to promoting nuclear disarmament as a priority objective was emphasized.

Cuba reaffirms the importance of multilateralism as a basic principle in disarmament negotiations. Our country remains confident and confirms its willingness to negotiate any issue agreed on by all States in the Conference on Disarmament.

Changing the Conference's working methods and rules of procedure is not the solution for making progress in negotiations at the Conference. Under the exact same arrangements as we have in place today, other important legal instruments on disarmament have been negotiated in the past. Cuba reiterates that the key to making real progress in the Conference lies in the political will of some States, in particular in terms of nuclear disarmament. We are, of course, open to improving the working methods of the Conference, including through the participation of civil society.

Cuba calls on the Conference on Disarmament to adopt a broad and balanced programme of work that reflects the real priorities in terms of nuclear disarmament and breaks the long-standing impasse which benefits only a few.

The Conference is in a position to negotiate various issues simultaneously, such as a treaty to eliminate and ban nuclear weapons, a treaty to prohibit an arms race in outer space, a treaty on effective security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States such as Cuba and a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material.

Cuba is in favour of initiating negotiations in the Conference on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable treaty to ban the production of all weapons-grade fissile material, including a declaration of all stocks of fissile material and their irreversible elimination within an agreed time frame, and covering as well the future production of such material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Negotiating a treaty on this topic would be a positive measure, yet it would be insufficient if subsequent steps for achieving nuclear disarmament were not agreed on.

We call for any plan to militarize outer space and cyberspace to be ceased immediately. We consider the prevention of an arms race in outer space to be a priority, as is preventing the placement of weapons in space. Legally binding agreements are needed to keep space free of any type of armament activity. The draft treaty presented to the Conference by the Russian Federation and China in 2008, and revised in 2014, is a good basis for debate and negotiations on this topic. We support negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament to achieve a legally binding treaty to completely prohibit the possibility of an arms race in outer space.

Furthermore, we condemn the covert and illicit use, by individuals, organizations or States, of other nations' computer systems to launch attacks on third countries in view of the potential for provoking international conflicts. The use of new information and communications technologies must comply fully with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with international law.

I would like to end by highlighting that there can be no greater priority for the Conference on Disarmament than achieving the total prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth. Cuba will continue to work tirelessly to achieve this objective.

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

**Mr. Deyneko** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the participants in the Conference on Disarmament once again to the common aim of preventing an arms race in outer space, which the representative of Cuba spoke about just now. It is in our interests to take advantage of a favourable situation — the current absence of arms in outer space — and, together, get down to substantive work on a treaty to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space.

You are all aware that, last year, Russia and China submitted an updated draft for consideration at the Conference. The text, in which delegations' views were taken into account, has generated considerable interest, including at the current session of the Conference. In view of the wide-ranging response to the draft, Russia and China have decided to update our joint comments. Today, we and the Chinese co-authors are submitting these updated comments, which were registered on 14 September 2015 as Conference document CD/2042.

We hope that participants in the Conference will use the intersessional period to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the document, which provides answers to many, if not all, the questions that concern them.

We urge you all to participate actively and constructively in an in-depth and results-oriented dialogue on the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space during the 2016 session. We trust that this discussion will lead to the launching of negotiations on the draft Treaty at the Conference on Disarmament.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and now give the floor to the representative of China.

**Mr. Fu Cong** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China and the Russian Federation recently submitted to the Conference on Disarmament their joint comments on the observations made by the United States of America on 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. We hope that our text will be reflected in the Conference's annual report as a formal document. Our Russian colleague has just made a brief reference to this, and I would also like to take this opportunity to share our thoughts on the matter.

China has always stressed that the prevention of an arms race in outer space is a priority for the Conference. Under the current circumstances, the importance of security in outer space and the increasing weaponization of outer space underscore just how vitally necessary it is that we immediately negotiate an international instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. To this end, in 2008 China and the Russian Federation submitted a draft treaty on outer space, and in 2014 we submitted an updated version to serve as the basis for the Conference's negotiation of a legal instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Since the submission of the draft, several rounds of substantive discussions have been held in the Conference to discuss its specific content, and some States have provided comments. In 2014, the United States submitted specific comments in writing on the draft treaty, which are contained in document CD/1998.

We have always stressed that the draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space is open for comment and that we welcome and value such comments from the parties. Such feedback will help us improve our draft and hold further in-depth and useful discussions on it. China and the Russian Federation have therefore carefully and thoroughly studied the comments made by States and will attempt to share our views and explanations in that regard.

I would simply like to stress the following two points. The first has to do with the scope of the treaty. China believes that it is essentially a preventive instrument that is aimed at prohibiting actions rather than weapons themselves. Though the draft does not directly prohibit ground-based, sea-based or air-based anti-satellite weapons, we believe that prohibiting the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against outer space objects will make it pointless for States parties to develop and produce such weapons, given the high cost of doing so.

The second point is the issue of inspections. China believes that inspections are not necessary for the treaty to be effective. Neither the 1967 Outer Space Treaty nor the Biological Weapons Convention provides for inspection mechanisms. National measures and the measures provided for in article VII of the draft treaty in relation to consultations on compliance, transparency and confidence-building are effective means of ensuring treaty compliance. In the future, when conditions are ripe, we could conclude an agreement on a specific additional protocol on inspections. Article V of the latest draft of the treaty has space to accommodate this.

The views that I have just shared with you have already been reflected in the comments that were recently submitted jointly by the Russian Federation and China, which we hope colleagues will study carefully and thoroughly.

Though the Conference is drawing to a close for this year, we believe that putting forward this document at this juncture will allow parties ample time to fully study it, so that next year the Conference may engage in more in-depth and substantive discussions on specific, relevant issues and lay the foundation for the future negotiation in the Conference of a legal instrument on this subject.

**The President:** I thank the representative of China for his statement and now give the floor to the representative of the United States.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Allow me just to say, Madam President, in response to the comments from the representatives of the Russian Federation and China that my Government looks very much forward with great interest in reading the comments that have been submitted today, and we will go through the text in great detail.

I do need to address one point that was raised by the Ambassador of China: that the updated comments do not address the question of anti-satellite weapons. As you all know,

and as I have said and others from my delegation have said in the past, we are particularly concerned about the continued development and testing by some States of these destructive anti-satellite systems. The development of such systems is destabilizing, as we have said, and threatens the long-term security and sustainability of the outer space environment. Debris-generating anti-satellite weapons present a host of threats to the space environment that threaten all who benefit from outer space. On the security side, anti-satellite weapons directly threaten satellites in the strategic and tactical information that those satellites provide, and their use can be escalatory in a crisis or conflict. They also pose a direct threat to key infrastructure used in arms control, verification monitoring, military command and control in communications and tactical warning of attack. A debris-generating test or attack may only be minutes in duration, but the consequences can last decades and indiscriminately threaten all space assets of all spacefaring nations.

I have one last point with regard to the issue of verification, because I think this is very important. We have said very clearly there is no integral verification regime to help monitor or verify the limitation on the placement of weapons in space. We cannot support an approach in which verification provisions were determined only through subsequent negotiation of some sort of additional protocol. Moreover, the United States has maintained that it is not possible with existing technologies or cooperative measures to effectively verify an agreement banning space-based weapons. I will stop there with my comments but, again, we look forward to reading these comments from Russia and China in much more detail and will come forth with a response subsequently.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the United States for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Finland. Ambassador, you have the floor.

**Ms. Kairamo** (Finland): My comments are rather more general, and I would like to take advantage of the fact that we have the Chair-designate of the First Committee here with us, for which I am very grateful. Therefore, my comments relate to the forthcoming First Committee meeting more generally.

Mr. Ambassador, let me first congratulate you on assuming the important task as the Chair of the First Committee and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation. Finland places great importance on disarmament and the arms control treaties. The First Committee is a key part of the disarmament machinery and we value its work greatly. It is obviously disappointing that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference was not able to agree on an outcome document. Finland invested, I dare say, quite heavily in the NPT Review Conference and the overall process, especially through the role of the Under-Secretary of State, Mr. Jaakko Laajava, as the facilitator for the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. As an outcome of his efforts, an avenue was opened for regional dialogue on issues of primary importance for security in the Middle East. At the moment, we need to look forward, as the NPT remains one of the key pillars of international security. Practical cooperation is now crucially important in taking the NPT agenda forward. This is also a key issue for the First Committee session. The commitments in all three pillars of the NPT remain valid and important. The 2010 NPT Final Document and action plan are still there, and many of the goals remain to be fulfilled. We should think that all States will abide by these commitments in years to come. The three conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons have highlighted the importance of that particular issue.

Overall, we should work on mechanisms that provide better understanding between all States on nuclear disarmament. One option that we might have would be for the General Assembly to set up an open-ended working group. This could provide a forum in order to seek further common ground and combine various approaches.



Most of us agree that a fissile material cut-off treaty should be negotiated and adopted as a first priority. The report of the Group of Governmental Experts and its elements provide a basis for future negotiations on the treaty. We are ready to engage substantively in the promotion of this objective in the First Committee and other forums.

After years of hard work, the Arms Trade Treaty finally entered into force in December last year. This is a significant achievement for the international community. We were also very happy with the outcome of the first meeting of States parties in Cancún, and we want to congratulate once more Ambassador Lomónaco and his team for the excellent meeting. As one of the Vice-Presidents of the next meeting of States parties we are looking forward to cooperating with the Treaty secretariat and the President of the next Conference of States Parties.

A more recent development is the Iran agreement. The joint comprehensive plan of action is a historic achievement and possibility. Finland, obviously as a part of the European Union, consistently supported the negotiations with Iran. It is important to support the International Atomic Energy Agency as they undertake their monitoring and verification role. For this role, it is also important to ensure sufficient funding for the Agency. We give our full support to the Agency in implementing the necessary verification and monitoring of the nuclear-related commitments of Iran as set out in the joint comprehensive plan of action.

And finally, in times when common security cooperation and principles are being tested and challenged, we should continue to protect and strengthen the commitments and norms that are vital for international security and mutual trust. Finland is committed to work towards this goal and perceives the First Committee as an important body to make further advances in this regard.

Let me once more express our full support for your work, Mr. Ambassador, and efforts to streamline the working methods of the First Committee.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Finland for her statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of the United Kingdom. Ambassador, you have the floor.

**Mr. Rowland** (United Kingdom): It was suggested during one of the statements we have heard this morning that a final consensus was not possible at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference because three countries opposed the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. My country was one of those that was unable to join consensus in May. Now, while I made quite clear at the time that this was because of our inability to accept the text on a Middle East weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone, I would like to be quite clear now that we are not opposed to the establishment of such a zone. Quite the opposite. The United Kingdom takes very seriously its responsibilities under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and its responsibilities as one of the co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. We exerted every effort according to the agreement reached on this issue in 2010. We regret that those efforts did not yield greater progress. Looking ahead, we stand by the principles underpinning the 2010 agreement. In particular, any process leading to the establishment of a Middle East weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone must be on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by all States of the region. When States of the region are ready to come together again to discuss such arrangements, the United Kingdom will be there to support them.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of India. Ambassador, you have the floor.

**Mr. Varma** (India): Madam President, we would like to convey our appreciation for the manner in which you have been taking forward the work of this Conference, including

efforts to bring to a successful conclusion our consultations on its annual report. I would like to thank the Conference secretariat for all their support for the work of this Conference during the year. We thank Ambassador Van Oosterom of the Netherlands, the Chair-designate of the First Committee, for his important statement this morning.

As this year's annual session comes to an end, we share the disappointment that this Conference was prevented once again from commencing negotiations and fulfilling its mandate as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. However, the adoption by the Conference of the report of the Co-Chair of the informal working group and the valuable work done under the coordinators on four key agenda items, as part of the structured informal discussions, were noteworthy developments this year, reinforcing the vital role that this Conference can play in future negotiation and conclusion of a legal instrument of global acceptance and application. The annual report of the Conference to the General Assembly should reinforce this important message.

We would like to take this opportunity to convey our appreciation to the four coordinators for their diligent efforts and for their reports, which, of course, have been prepared in their personal capacity and thus without prejudice to the national positions of delegations. Our compliments to Ambassador Amr Ramadan of Egypt for his comprehensive report on nuclear disarmament, which remains a priority for a number of member States in this Conference and is a priority that India fully shares and it thus has consistently called for global non-discriminatory and verifiable disarmament in a time-bound framework. We regret that the Conference was not able to take forward the proposal of India for the negotiation of a convention on the prohibition of use of nuclear weapons or the proposal put forward by the Group of 21 for a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention. We would like to commend Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha of Sri Lanka for his report, which has captured important dimensions of the debate on negative security assurances. Ambassador Michael Biontino of Germany conducted in-depth discussions on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

In our view, the highlight this year was the consensus report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the treaty, contained in document CD/2023. The report underlined that the treaty and its negotiation in the Conference remain a priority enjoying broad international support, and document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein remains the most suitable basis on which future negotiations should commence. We hope that the Conference will be able to move in this direction in its next annual session. Discussions on prevention of an arms race in outer space under Ambassador Matthew Rowland of the United Kingdom broke new ground on pertinent issues, though a comprehensive legally binding approach to prevent the weaponization of outer space still does not enjoy the support of some major spacefaring nations. We will give careful consideration to the further written clarifications provided by Russia and China today on 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 will be contained in document CD/2042. On the whole, the structured informal discussions served a useful purpose, and the Indian delegation actively contributed to the in-depth discussions in the hope that these would lay the basis for the launch of future negotiations in this Conference.

As countries around the world mark the centenary of the First World War, we cannot but pause to reflect on the immense and horrific loss of life and the impact of that war on subsequent world history, including the establishment of institutions that were located in the very premises that we use today. We recall that nearly one and a half million soldiers from India, and our region, fought in this war, with unparalleled bravery, on distant shores, far from their homelands, in alien climates and conditions. As many as 74,000 never returned home. As homage to and in remembrance of their ultimate sacrifice, the Indian Mission to the Conference on Disarmament earlier this month donated to the United

Nations Library a set of books on the subject written by Indian authors. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General of this Conference, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Michael Møller, for his support, and the Chief Librarian, Ms. Charlotte Warakaulle, and her staff for making available to all of us the invaluable resource and treasure that is the United Nations Library.

**The President:** I thank the representative of India for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Cuba. Ambassador, you have the floor.

**Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I apologize for requesting the floor again and will be very brief.

In my country, and I think also in other Latin American countries, there is a very common saying that goes: "If the shoe fits, wear it." I think we have seen an example of that at this meeting of the Conference on Disarmament; and we have heard some comments from other delegations along those lines.

I just want to specify that the resolution on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference was an essential component of the package agreed on. It was, of course, as part of this package that it was possible to extend the Treaty indefinitely. What we are seeing now is that the international community is feeling frustrated because this package has not been implemented and a very fundamental part of it, namely the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons has been postponed for too long already. Allow me to repeat, Madam President, that the failure of the NPT Review Conference, the lack of a final consensus document and the inability of this Conference to carry out its mandate and move on to negotiations on multilateral treaties on disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, are all due to the lack of political will of some States to make real progress.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Cuba for her statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. Sir, you have the floor.

**Mr. Al Nuqari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, as this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor during the formal meeting of the Conference on Disarmament under your presidency, I should like to express my deep gratitude and appreciation for your outstanding efforts to finalize the report on the work of the Conference and to commend you on your excellent conduct of its proceedings.

I intend to focus in my statement on the issue of the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Let me first thank Cuba for the excellent manner in which it addressed the issue both in its initial statement and in its subsequent comment. Some parties are mistaken when they seek to propound misleading views to the effect that the establishment of such a zone is governed by the same procedures as are applicable to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world. The difference between the two is, first and foremost, that discussions concerning the establishment of the region in question are not confined to nuclear weapons but also cover all other weapons of mass destruction, whereas discussions on the establishment of other regions are confined to nuclear weapons. Secondly, the establishment of the zone in question is not governed by the general principles laid down at the first special session on disarmament. States have assumed certain obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In particular, the last paragraph of the resolution on the Middle East refers to the responsibility of all States parties to the NPT to establish such a zone. Furthermore, the depositary States of the NPT bear special responsibility for ensuring compliance with this obligation. It follows that the depositary States must take action in good faith to promote the establishment of the zone rather than obstructing it. Such obstruction violates one of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, namely the principle of good faith. We are aware, of course, that Russia, which is also a depositary

State, has not only fulfilled its responsibilities but has also submitted constructive proposals aimed at addressing the consequences of the unsuccessful efforts of the Finnish facilitator, Mr. Laajava, to fulfil the task assigned to him. Of course, my Government has consistently reiterated its support for the zone and called for it in a Security Council resolution when Syria was a member of the Council. At the time, Syria submitted a draft text concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone but, when the text was finalized and ready to be voted on, it faced a risk of being blocked. Syria continues to call for the establishment of the zone and urges the depositary States to shoulder their responsibilities in good faith and to cease serving as an impediment to the establishment of the zone and as a tool that led to the impasse at the last NPT Review Conference.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of the United States. Ambassador, you have the floor.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I apologize for requesting the floor again, but I felt I needed to take the floor to respond to some of the comments made about the weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone in the Middle East. Few countries have worked as hard as the United States to try to bring about this conference. We have spent a lot of time, effort and resources to try to make it happen. What we have tried to do from the beginning is to ensure that the conference — once it does convene — is based on a consensus-based process. We felt this important as the other depositories, frankly, to ensure that all countries feel a part of this process, feel that they are not going to be singled out and that this process of trying to bring about a conference is fair and equitable. With regard to the lack of an outcome at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, as one delegation or representative in essence blamed three countries for the inability of the Conference to achieve that outcome, I would say, indeed, that that was not the case. Frankly, we know exactly what happened at the Review Conference in New York, and what we tried to do — and will continue to try to do — is to build a consensus-based process that will allow us to eventually get to a weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone conference; but a process that tries to force upon all parties of the region a particular point of view or agenda is not going to bring about a successful conference, so it is going to be important that whatever we do going forward, that it be consensus-based and that the arrangements will be freely arrived at by all countries of that region.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the United States for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Egypt. Ambassador, you have the floor.

**Mr. Atta** (Egypt): Madam President, allow me first to express my gratitude for the way you are conducting the work of this Conference in this plenary, as this is the first time I take the floor in a plenary meeting under your presidency.

With regard to the Middle East nuclear-free zone, Egypt would like to begin by aligning itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 21: our position is clearly expressed in the statement that was delivered by Indonesia on this issue. I would like also to thank Cuba for the way they raised this issue. I do not wish to elaborate on our national position with regard to this issue, but I would like to clarify one point. Blocking the outcome documents of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference was not linked only to the Middle East nuclear-free zone: it was pretty clear that by blocking the outcome document or any agreed outcome on the Middle East nuclear-free zone, we are blocking the entire NPT process, so the failure of the Review Conference was linked not only to the Middle East. I will repeat here what the Permanent Representative of Cuba said: there was also a weak document on nuclear disarmament, and by blocking the Middle East issue, we blocked also the other documents of the Conference.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this point? That does not seem to be the case. So I would suggest that we adjourn the meeting for today. The next formal plenary meeting will be held on Thursday, 17 September, at 10 a.m., at which point we would hope to be able to adopt the annual report of the Conference, although we will have to see from our next discussion here whether that is going to be possible. This concludes our meeting of today. This meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.*