

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and fourth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 6 June 2019, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Jorge Valero (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Dear colleagues, last Thursday, 4 June, the Secretariat circulated a draft programme of work presented by the Venezuelan presidency. As I mentioned earlier, I intend to discuss that draft today. The zero draft of the programme of work before us is the result of broad formal, informal, bilateral and multilateral consultations held after the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela assumed the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament on 27 May, in accordance with its rules of procedure.

Bilateral consultations are progressing well, as are the informal thematic sessions in which delegations have the opportunity to reflect on the work of previous years. In this connection, we are pleased that the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies established by the decision contained in document CD/2118 of 2018 have expressed their willingness to contribute to our common objective of reviving the Conference and breaking the stalemate.

During the bilateral consultations, we were pleased to note the widespread support for the presidency's efforts to reach consensus on a programme of work, as provided in the rules of procedure.

Most delegations have recommended that the presidency sustain its efforts to consult with the greatest possible number of Conference member States and encourage participation in plenary consultations, thematic sessions and bilateral consultations. Until now, we have consulted with at least 22 member States from different regional groups. All those States that have responded to our invitation have provided useful and sincere contributions. The document draws on other draft programmes of work presented by previous presidencies of Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Syrian Arab Republic and addresses all the items on the agenda of the Conference.

The aim is to maintain a balance between the different elements and approach them with the degree of maturity that will allow for continuing negotiations.

The draft programme, in its preamble, refers to the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It also contains a direct reference to rule 28 of the rules of procedure, which calls on the Conference to establish its programme of work on the basis of its agenda, and retains language on promoting multilateralism that we consider to be important.

In the operative part, we have adopted a simplified and harmonized approach. Firstly, we have recommended establishing subsidiary bodies for all items on the agenda in the form of working groups. Given the advanced stage of the Conference, we see a need to divide the discussions among these groups. We have chosen the working group format because it enhances the status of the negotiations and discussions and reflects the participating delegations' commitment to tackle an arduous, yet tangible task. We have also tried to endow each working group with a negotiating mandate, but this has proven more difficult given the high level of polarization within our Conference. We are sure that, over the course of the remaining two weeks, we can identify those aspects on which we can reach a genuine consensus and improve the draft.

I do not expect any specific comments on the text today, since I understand that most delegations will wish to consult with their capitals, but I would welcome some preliminary reactions on the document, in particular on paragraphs 8 (d) and (e). I would be glad to engage in additional bilateral consultations with those delegations that wish to put forward further proposals or specific comments. We are entirely open to submit additions in as many versions as necessary in order to get as close to consensus as possible. Should the draft enjoy the consensus required, following further consultations, it might be possible to adopt it at the last plenary meeting of this presidency, which is scheduled to be held on 18 June 2018. We believe that the onus is on the President to present the draft programme of work in an open and transparent fashion, and that the member States of the Conference have a shared responsibility to make every effort to reach consensus.

We therefore sincerely appeal to delegations of the member States of the Conference to engage with us to reach this objective. Distinguished colleagues, I would now like to turn to the list of speakers on this item and give the floor to the delegation of Belarus.

Mr. Nikolaichik (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, since the delegation of Belarus is taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, I would first like to congratulate you and assure you of our delegation's full support. We would also like to

thank you for organizing an extremely informative meeting and informal discussion on the issue of nuclear disarmament.

As a country that has voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons without preconditions, Belarus supports the reinforcement of the non-proliferation regime established under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Belarus remains committed to the sustained and progressive achievement of the goals set out in article VI of the Treaty. We are in favour of reducing international tensions and restoring trust between the main players and coming up with practical and realistic measures to provide security assurances to States that have voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons and give such assurances a legal foundation.

Belarus is concerned by the degradation of the existing system of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The positive trends of the early and mid-1990s have essentially gone into reverse. A rejection of key agreements in the area is under way. For Belarus, the effective dismantling of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which kept an entire class of delivery systems out of Europe, is a highly sensitive issue. The termination of the Treaty will have a negative impact on security both in the region and worldwide. We believe that all interested countries should take measures to preserve the nuclear status quo in the region.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been impossible for more than 20 years. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme approved by the Security Council is under threat. Worrying predictions are being made about the expected results of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Countries are increasing their spending on the modernization of nuclear arsenals and are basically entering a new arms race. In these circumstances, we are urging all States to seek unity on the vital issue of strengthening international security.

The Conference on Disarmament is a unique forum at which all the key players in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are represented. In our view, an immediate start to the negotiation process for issues on the Conference agenda will facilitate a new de-escalation. We consider a comprehensive consideration of items 1, 2 and 4 of the agenda, as occurred at the meeting of 4 June, to be of interest given the interrelatedness and common aim of these items and to merit greater consideration by the Conference. We believe that such an approach could have a positive impact on the rationalization of its work.

With respect to the agenda items, we note that the matter of universal negative security assurances to States that have renounced nuclear weapons is ripe for moving to the negotiation stage. Such assurances could include guarantees from nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States and also prevent situations in which a non-nuclear-weapon State aims to possess nuclear weapons to gain an advantage over other non-nuclear-weapon States. The assurances must be universal and have an effective implementation mechanism. We are convinced that drafting a legally binding instrument on negative security assurances would have a positive impact on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Belarus is also ready to support the start of negotiations for an international treaty banning the production of fissile material. We think that these steps will bring us closer to achieving "global zero".

Mr. President, the Belarusian delegation is grateful for the draft programme of work you have circulated. The document is currently being studied in our capital. We can also state that we are ready to use it as a basis to produce a clear framework for the activities of the Conference. We are convinced that in the present circumstances a programme of work must be adopted as soon as possible.

Since the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating body, we believe that discussions on key issues such as the format of future instruments and their goals, subjects, scope and substantive conditions should be transferred to the appropriate subsidiary bodies established by the Conference. In our view, only focus on a tangible outcome can give impetus to the work of the Conference. I can also assure you that the delegation of Belarus is willing to cooperate constructively on the draft programme of work.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished representative of Belarus for his statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency. Let me see if any other delegation would like to take the floor. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. Since my distinguished colleague from Belarus mentioned the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in his statement, I would like to draw the attention of the delegates to the Conference on Disarmament to the following.

Next week will mark one year since the first Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States of America Summit was held in Singapore. It was a momentous occasion of great importance in promoting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the region. The 12 June statement made jointly by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States and adopted at the Summit enjoyed full support and approval from all countries across the world. And it remains vivid in our memory that in the wake of the Summit, many delegations in this chamber welcomed and supported the outcome of the Summit. In this regard, I would like to read out the press statement of the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, released on 4 June to mark this occasion. I will not read the statement in its entirety to save time for our substantive discussion; I will touch only on key points that shed light on the main cause of the current standstill in the dialogue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. The following is the excerpt:

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has made tireless efforts over the past year to establish new relations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, building a lasting and stable region of peace on the Korean Peninsula, and to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, as stipulated in the 12 June joint statement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. It has also made efforts such as undertaking practical initiatives that require strategically decisive measures. However, it is regrettable to see that, during the past year, the United States has become ever more undisguised in its scheme to annihilate us by force, while deliberately turning away from the implementation of the joint statement and insisting on our unilateral surrender of nuclear weapons.

At the second Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Summit, in Hanoi, the United States made the big mistake of missing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity by insisting on the dismantlement of the nuclear arsenal first. This overshadows the future of the talks between the two countries.

Had the United States done anything serious or sincere to address the implementation of the joint statement, there would have been much progress towards denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

In his policy speech, the Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea said that, given the persistence of deep-rooted hostility between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, it is necessary for the implementation of the joint statement that both sides give up their unilateral demands and find a constructive solution that meets each other's interest. And he said that, to this end, the United States must move away from its current method of calculation and come up with a new one.

The 12 June joint statement is the commitment that two countries have made to the world, and it is the task both sides should be jointly accountable for.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains unchanged in its stand and determination to value and implement in good faith the joint statement signed by the top leaders of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States at the first-ever talks between the two countries.

However, if the United States, a dialogue partner, fails to carry out its obligation and keeps resorting to policy hostile to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the fate of the joint statement will not be promising.

Whether the 12 June joint statement will remain effective or turn out to be a mere blank sheet of paper will now be determined by how the United States responds to our fair and reasonable stand.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegate from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I now give the floor to the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe. Your Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. Mushayavanhu (Zimbabwe): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation is pleased to participate in this debate and join others that have spoken before us in thanking you for the draft programme of work you have placed before the Conference on Disarmament. We are glad that the draft before us has been a product of broad consultations. In this respect, my delegation wishes to express its profound appreciation for the sterling effort that has yielded this programme of work, which, we believe, is balanced. We will continue with an in-depth study of the draft programme of work, but these are our preliminary comments.

Mr. President, my delegation believes that this programme of work is a good basis for deliberations. We think that this draft sets an appropriate tempo for succeeding presidencies, including for the 2020 session. My delegation is satisfied that this draft programme of work proposes the establishment of working groups for all the priority agenda items of the Conference, complete with proposals for negotiating mandates, so that we can resume substantive work. As I indicated, we will continue to study the draft in greater depth, but these are our preliminary comments.

Mr. President, the fact that we are still discussing the programme of work under the fourth presidency of the session clearly indicates the need for some creative approaches to organizing our work in these unusual circumstances. In this respect, I will focus a bit more on procedural issues. My delegation wishes to draw the attention of the Conference to rule 22 of the rules of procedure, which allows us to consider, among other things, the very pertinent question regarding the organization of the work of this Conference. Rule 22 states that "the Conference may hold informal meetings, with or without experts, to consider as appropriate substantive matters as well as questions concerning its organization of work".

Given the painfully little progress, if any, that we make in the Conference, year in, year out, my delegation believes that perhaps we need to adopt a programme of work with a long-term horizon, far beyond the present confines of one session. Our look at the rules of procedure indicates that a multi-year approach is not proscribed. Rule 28 says that, "on the basis of its agenda, the Conference, at the beginning of its annual session, shall establish its programme of work, which will include a schedule of its activities for that session". We think that a multi-year programme of work can always be adopted in one session and reaffirmed at the beginning of subsequent sessions. We believe that the adoption of such a multi-year programme of work does not therefore require the Conference to amend its existing rules of procedure. Indeed, this long-term horizon has the distinct advantage of liberating the Conference from its perennial fixation with an annual programme of work and allowing it to resume substantive work.

Mr. President, the fact that today, at the midpoint of the 2019 session, we are still discussing the programme of work suggests that perhaps we need to have another look at how all can be reorganized, as already provided for under rule 22 of the rules of procedure. My delegation therefore wishes to present to the Conference a formal proposal to reorganize our work and introduce a multi-year programme of work. We believe that we should not continue to pretend that we are in conformity with rule 22 of the rules of procedure, when we are in fact discussing the programme of work not at the beginning of the session but all the way towards the end.

The rules of procedure also require that we include a schedule of activities of the Conference for this session, as we correctly did for the subsidiary bodies during the 2018 session. The question which we should ask ourselves is: what useful activities could we seriously undertake in the remaining time for the 2019 session even if the Conference were to agree on a programme of work under the Presidents of either of my colleagues, the Permanent Representatives of Venezuela and of Viet Nam? I think we need to collectively reflect more deeply on this organizational question and consider adopting a multi-year

approach to the programme of work. At our last plenary meeting, on Tuesday, earlier this week, one delegation in fact also flagged a similar idea. The fact of the matter is that whichever way we look at this issue, our negotiations on a programme of work with a limited, one-year horizon have been stifling the Conference, diverting it from resuming substantive work. We agree with the Australian delegation that perhaps our negotiations should have a longer-term horizon in order for them to be sustainable and achieve the desired outcomes.

Mr. President, our proposal for a multi-year, long-term horizon for the programme of work also draws on the experience of the 2018 session. Colleagues will recall that, at the beginning of last year, agreement was reached on a programme of work that included the establishment of subsidiary bodies and the attendant schedule of activities for that session. With the benefit of hindsight, my delegation believes that, after the good work done within the subsidiary bodies, we should have built into the 2018 programme of work the element of automaticity in terms of rolling over the life of the subsidiary bodies in subsequent sessions. My proposal is based on these kinds of experience in the Conference. If the limited, one-year horizon is stifling the work of the Conference, then it behoves us, the membership, to be practical and pragmatic in the organization of our work. We are, of course, not oblivious to the fact that each new President will want to inject his own ideas into the programme of work.

Finally, Mr. President, the last time that we negotiated the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was 23 years ago. And underlining the fact that critical challenges before this Conference are not amenable to a quick-fix solution, we need to be creative in our approach and ensure that progress that is achieved in one year is rolled over to subsequent sessions. Indeed, the progress and goodwill achieved in the subsidiary bodies could have been rolled over and built on during the current session. My delegation is ready to engage with your office and other members to further refine this proposal.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Your Excellency, for the kind words addressed to the presidency and your insightful comments. Let me see if any other delegation wishes to take the floor. I give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Berkat (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to convey the Algerian delegation's sincere appreciation for the draft programme of work presented. This draft constitutes a step forward in revitalizing the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament and a positive contribution to improving the common understanding of the different issues on the Conference's agenda. We are grateful for all your efforts to support the resumption of this Conference's work. The fact that your draft takes into consideration the proposals and suggestions of your predecessors is proof of your commitment to the spirit of continuity and commonality that characterizes your constructive approach. Our preliminary assessment is that your draft provides a good basis for our negotiations.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of the full support of my delegation, which will participate constructively and actively in the discussions with Conference members on this draft once we have received the views of our capital.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegate of Algeria for the comments and the kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azarsa (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to thank you and your team as well as the secretariat for preparing and disseminating the zero draft programme of work, which is a result of broad consultations and builds on the commendable job done during their presidencies by the Ambassador of Ukraine and the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, to whom my delegation is also grateful. As for the draft, I have transmitted it to my capital and am still waiting for instructions. However, at this stage, I would like to share with you and other colleagues some of my delegation's preliminary comments.

This draft is very well prepared and contains the very elements that are in the agenda and mandate of the Conference on Disarmament. Preparing this draft shows your seriousness in coming back to the serious undertaking of this gathering, which is nuclear disarmament and the four core issues. My delegation knows that it is a heavy task, but we

believe this draft is a good start in the right direction. My delegation would also like to express its readiness to start working on this draft. You can count on our full support and coordination. I hope that, with some minor amendments, this draft can garner consensus.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the comments and for the kind words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the delegation of Egypt.

Mr. Elsayed (Egypt): Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. First, I would like to take note of the very interesting proposal made by the delegation of Zimbabwe. We think it is an interesting proposal that can be further developed and enhanced. However, my comments today will be limited to the programme of work.

Mr. President, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for all the efforts that you have been making to resume substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament. That engagement is indicative of your commitment to the work of the Conference. And although we are still, like other delegations, awaiting our capital's comments and instructions on the draft programme of work that you presented last Tuesday, I would like to offer some preliminary views.

Mr. President, the Conference has several issues of paramount significance on its agenda for negotiations with the aim of concluding legally binding instruments and, while we appreciate the view that the seven items on the Conference agenda should be pursued equally and, possibly, simultaneously, we would like to underscore that the four core agenda items are of the utmost priority to the Conference. In this context, it is highly relevant to refer to the conclusions of the final report on the work of the informal working group established in 2015, as contained in document CD/2033. The focus of the Conference, in accordance with these conclusions, should remain on the core agenda items, and the primary objective should remain the negotiation of legally binding instruments.

Mr. President, we welcome the order and the focus of the agenda items as presented in the draft programme of work, and we would like to stress the importance of sustaining this order and focus. We note with satisfaction that you have attempted to build upon the substantive work carried out in previous years. Furthermore, we appreciate your proposal suggesting that there be negotiating mandates on several agenda items – we would prefer this language to be consistent across all agenda items. We support as well your proposal in agenda item 4 to negotiate with a view to reaching an agreement on elements of legally binding instruments and would like to include language that confirms the fundamental elements of universality, unconditionality, irrevocability and effectiveness as key components of this legally binding instrument.

We believe that the special focus on biosecurity in agenda item 5 should be discussed in the relevant forum mandated to deal with biological weapons and are of the view that the topic of emerging weapons and technology is discussed thoroughly in other forums, more specifically the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Agenda item 7 on transparency with the focus proposed in the draft programme of work is already addressed in other forums, as there are other mechanisms that can deal with the issue of greater transparency in conventional arms and transfers and trade.

Mr. President, we would like to reiterate our appreciation for your efforts and we stand ready to engage with the Conference members in a constructive and interactive manner to resume substantive work in the Conference.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegate of Egypt for his statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency. I will now give the floor to the delegation of India.

Ms. Bhandari (India): Thank you, Mr. President. The delegation of India would like to thank you for sharing with us a draft programme of work in accordance with rule 29 of the Conference on Disarmament's rules of procedure. We have shared the draft with our capital and are awaiting comments on the same. We look forward to engaging in discussions constructively in the coming sessions once we receive those comments.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished representative of India. I now give the floor to the delegation of Mexico.

Mr. Martínez Ruiz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Firstly, we would like to thank you for submitting the draft programme of work. Like other delegations who spoke before me, we are still waiting to hear back from our capital and the comments we make at this point are purely preliminary.

We think that the document is a suitable basis for making progress on the substantive items, in line with the negotiating mandate of the Conference on Disarmament. We welcome the fact that all items on the agenda have been included. We also appreciate the emphasis placed on the role of the Conference as a negotiating forum and the recognition that the different items have reached different levels of maturity.

We think it is appropriate not to try to frame the negotiations on each issue in one specific document, as proposed in earlier draft programmes submitted at previous sessions that drew exclusively on the reports of the subsidiary bodies adopted the year before. We believe that the wealth of the work carried out by the Conference over the years goes well beyond these reports and therefore appreciate the broad approach taken in the document you circulated.

Like other delegations before us, we are concerned that paragraph 8 (b), unlike subparagraphs (a), (c) and (d), does not contain a negotiating mandate. Given that it refers to the Shannon mandate and recognizes the maturity of the issue of banning the production of fissile material (in the form of a fissile material cut-off treaty), including with the elements identified in the reports of the group of governmental experts and the expert preparatory group, we believe that it should include a specific negotiating mandate.

We also hope that, as work on the document progresses, a schedule of activities can be included to provide clarity on the work schedule and acknowledge that we are working under time constraints.

We are aware that key issues have been included in subparagraph (e), but believe that we should avoid duplication with work done in other forums, in particular in the framework of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Lastly, my delegation has repeatedly drawn attention to the need to review the Conference's methods of work and rules of procedure. We obviously recognize and regret that the efforts to negotiate a programme of work for this session have been tainted by politicization, but we believe that we have to revisit the issue from the point of view of the effectiveness of the Conference. The topic proposed by the delegation of Zimbabwe on this occasion could be discussed in that context. These are our preliminary observations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegate of Mexico for the statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency. I will now give the floor to the delegation of Indonesia.

Mr. Bektikusuma (Indonesia): Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, distinguished colleagues. I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, and your team for the draft programme of work contained in document CD/WP.620, which you circulated through the secretariat on 4 June 2019. Like other delegations, we sent your proposal to our capital for further consideration. While waiting for an official response from my capital, allow me to share with you my delegation's initial response to your draft programme of work, which we consider provides a good basis for the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, I can assure you that the phrase "balanced and comprehensive" is an expression that you hear repeatedly during the discussions on or negotiations over the draft programme of work of the Conference. Different delegations interpret those words differently. Most delegations suggest that the phrase means a programme of work should contain a mandate or mandates, or even a negotiating mandate or mandates. But the fact is that we have no consensus on what a balanced and comprehensive programme of work is. Over the past decades, draft programmes of work have come and gone; never has one been adopted by this august body. My delegation, frankly speaking, is beginning to wonder whether a programme of work in the form that it has taken in recent years serves any useful purpose.

Mr. President, rule 28 of the Conference's rules of procedure requires the Conference, on the basis of its agenda, to establish its programme of work, which will include a schedule of its activities. Nothing about mandates is mentioned. The activities must, however, deal with matters covered by the agenda. One of the actions identified in the schedule of activities is the establishment, under rule 23 of the rules of procedure, of subsidiary bodies. Under this rule, it is clearly stated that "the Conference shall define the mandate for each of such subsidiary bodies and provide appropriate support for their work". Mandates, thus, are a creature not of a programme of work but of a subsidiary body.

Mr. President, in the 1990s we saw the programme of work as consisting mainly of a schedule of activities, quite separate from the questions of mandates of subsidiary bodies. Indeed, in the 1990s, the agenda of the Conference, which was contained in document CD/963, encompassed a programme of work that contained a schedule of activities and an outline of items on which it was proposed to focus, including improved and effective functioning. The approach adopted in document CD/963, in which the notion of a programme of work and that of a straightforward planning mechanism setting out the activities for the year based on the Conference agenda were equated, has the advantage of reducing the number of decisions to one and simply allowing work to flow as circumstances allow. We need to ask ourselves, Mr. President, whether we have consciously abandoned our former approach and, if so, why. Because we have witnessed the consistent failure of this new approach to concluding a programme of work.

Mr. President, my delegation is of the view that the rules of procedure prescribe no format except that the programme of work must contain a schedule of activities, taking into account recommendations of the General Assembly, proposals presented by member States of the Conference and decisions of the Conference. Members are not obliged to develop a programme of work that contains a mandate. A programme of work need be nothing more than a list of projected activities, accompanied by a timetable for the activities. Some delegations raised this issue during the negotiations over the draft programme of work under the Ukrainian presidency in 2019, the Syrian presidency last year and even when the Russian presidency tabled a programme of work in 2017. There were similar draft decisions under the presidency of the United Kingdom.

We ignore the possibility and adopt neither a programme of work nor a decision. Perhaps, Mr. President, it is time to reconsider our approach to a programme of work. Perhaps the magic formula is simplicity. Perhaps a programme of work consisting of a list of projected activities accompanied by a timetable can help us break out of the long-standing stalemate in the Conference. My delegation sincerely hopes that the States members of the Conference will give serious consideration to simplifying our approach to a Conference programme of work once again.

To conclude, Mr. President, should you or other members of the Conference still prefer to have the so-called balanced and comprehensive programme of work of recent times, I shall return with a more specific response from my capital, which I believe will add some more complications to the discussion. Nevertheless, my delegation stands ready to work with you, your team and other delegations of the Conference. With this, I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished representative of Indonesia for the comments and words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. First, I wish to express my thanks and appreciation for the remarkable efforts made by you, Mr. President, and your team in preparing the draft programme of work contained in document CD/WP.620, published on Tuesday, 4 June 2019. The proposed programme of work reflects the responsibility and seriousness with which you have fulfilled your mandate as President of the Conference and I hope that it will enable the Conference to resume its substantive work.

My delegation is ready to work constructively on the basis of the proposed programme of work, which is a good foundation on which to build. I hope that the proposed programme will facilitate positive interactions between the various delegations by identifying areas of common ground and paving the way for a consensus-based formula that will enable the Conference to resume its substantive work.

We have transmitted the proposed programme of work to the capital, and we are awaiting the Government's comments, which we will communicate to you once we have received them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegate of the Syrian Arab Republic for his comments and the words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the delegation of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Thank you, Mr. President. I do not have any comments on your draft at this stage, but I want to take the floor to react to the statement by the Ambassador of Zimbabwe and my Indonesian colleague. Mexico and Egypt also made comments.

The suggestions that have been made are eminently sensible, and I think that I touched on this in informal discussions the other day. There is no doubt that there are real structural issues that are not helping us fulfil our mandate. I know that, in 2018, we tried and actually managed to have the subsidiary bodies roll over, and if my memory serves me correctly, we also tried to do the same in 2017 with the working group on the way ahead. For a range of reasons, that was not possible, but our colleagues are right: we do need to talk about the way we do our work and how we use the rules of procedure. Do we have a creative-growth mindset when we interpret them or are we using the rules of procedure to narrow our scope and ensure that we are not able to fulfil our mandate? There have been some really excellent suggestions made today, and I think it is well worth the Conference on Disarmament thinking very seriously about a multi-year approach. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegate of Australia for the comments. I now give the floor to the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ju Young-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. Apologies for taking the floor again. I would like to react to the draft proposal on the programme of work you presented. My delegation commends the Venezuelan presidency for its efforts to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament, and I once again express my delegation's full support to your presidency in carrying out its task.

The draft programme of work you circulated is indeed a product of your efforts and a positive initiative for moving the Conference forward, as it encompasses proposals presented by your predecessors.

My delegation has sent the draft to my capital for feedback and will share it with you if any is received. Although the draft proposal requires further consultation and fine-tuning, my delegation will study it very carefully and engage in a constructive way with a view to finalizing it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegate of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency. Let me see if any other delegation would like to take the floor. The distinguished delegation of the Russian Federation has the floor.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Distinguished colleagues, I would also like to speak on behalf of the Russian Federation regarding the document presented here – a draft programme of work for our forum. First of all, I would like to thank the Venezuelan presidency for the document it has circulated, which truly confirms the serious attitude of Venezuela towards this important document for our forum, which would allow us to begin negotiating work.

As for the document itself, we consider it a good starting point for our joint work. It is genuinely based on the principles of balance and comprehensiveness and its different parts merit detailed analysis. Like the other delegations, we have sent the document to our capital and will await instructions regarding any comments or proposals for improvement of its individual provisions.

I would also like to align myself with my Belarusian colleague as regards the fact that in the present circumstances, characterized by increasing tension in international relations, the start of negotiation work at the Conference on Disarmament is of vital importance for international security and the maintenance of international peace. I also support my Belarusian colleague in his view that we must focus on a tangible outcome for

the work of the Conference, which we believe must consist of two parts: firstly achieving an agreement or compromise on the programme of work and subsequently obtaining an outcome in the form of new international instruments on arms control and non-proliferation from the negotiations launched based on that programme of work.

To conclude, I would like to call on all my colleagues to make every effort in joint work to agree on the draft programme of work and show the same enthusiasm demonstrated by the delegations in the work of the subsidiary bodies in 2018. In our view, the work done by the five subsidiary bodies is worthy of attention and can serve as a basis for further work once the programme of work is adopted. Moreover, several curious and interesting ideas have been voiced in the chamber today, which merit attention and careful consideration. I would therefore call upon the Venezuelan presidency to look at these ideas and possibly express an opinion on them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency. Let me see if any other delegation wishes to take the floor. I give the floor to the distinguished delegation of the Pakistan.

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Allow me also to join other delegations in thanking you for this draft programme of work. It is indeed a very solid basis for further work. We deeply appreciate the extensive consultations undertaken by you and your team in preparing this document. You have clearly been very attentive and very alive to the different views expressed by the various delegations and have presented a very comprehensive and well-balanced draft. Like other delegations, we have also sent it to our capital and we are awaiting instructions – soon, we hope. Our initial reaction at the level of the delegation has been very positive, and as soon as we receive further feedback from Islamabad, we will convey it to you. But thank you very much for this proposal. You can count on our constructive engagement and cooperation in bringing this to a successful conclusion.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished delegate of Pakistan. Thank you for your statement. Thank you for the kind words addressed to the presidency. I will now give the floor to his Excellency, the Ambassador of China.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you Mr. President. Like other delegations that have taken the floor today, the Chinese delegation would like to thank you for submitting this draft programme of work. We also greatly appreciate the statements made by all the delegations at today's meeting, as they have all expressed their great admiration for your active efforts in your capacity as President of the Conference to continue urging the Conference to achieve a programme of work as soon as possible.

Just now the Ambassadors of Zimbabwe, the Russian Federation and Australia, along with many other colleagues, also spoke about ways to adopt creative approaches to further strengthen the continuity of the Conference's annual programme of work. The multi-year approach to the programme of work, mentioned by the Ambassador of Zimbabwe, is a new idea; at the same time, our colleague from Australia has reminded us that, last year when we set up the subsidiary bodies, everyone tried to imagine a system where they would automatically roll over. All these ideas are very important, and our delegation looks forward to further discussions with all of our colleagues to explore them, so as to maintain continuity and stability while moving ahead with the substantive work of the Conference, taking into account the concerns of all parties in a comprehensive and balanced manner, and especially to avoid the impact of extraneous political factors on the Conference's work.

We look forward to continuing, under your leadership and with the rest of our colleagues, our exchange of views on the programme of work that you have put forward and on the points raised by our colleagues on this topic here today.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement and for the comments addressed to the presidency. Would any other delegation wish to take the floor? I see no more requests for the floor. Excellencies, dear colleagues, I would like to thank you for your thoughts and comments on the draft. I will try to take them into account and present you with a new, revised version of the draft programme of work.

As announced on 28 May, the next plenary meeting will be held on Wednesday, 12 June at 3 p.m. We will hold an informal thematic session on items 5, 6 and 7 of the agenda, with the representative of Belarus and Ms. Kerstin Vignard, Deputy Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research of the Conference on Disarmament as panellists.

Ladies and gentlemen, this very productive meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.