

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the thousand five hundred and ninth meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 20 June 2019, at 10.10 a.m.

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

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Excellencies, distinguished delegates, Ms. Karspersen, ladies and gentlemen, I have the honour to call to order the 1509th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Dear colleagues, as of yesterday, Wednesday, 19 June 2019 at 3 p.m., we had received one request, from Brunei Darussalam, to participate in the Conference as an observer. This request is contained in document CD/WP.617/Add.7, a copy of which is on your desks. Any request from non-member States received after that date will be presented for your consideration and decision at the next plenary meeting. May I take it that the Conference decides to invite this State to participate in our work in accordance with its rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to suspend this meeting briefly in order to allow the representative of Brunei Darussalam, who has just been invited to participate in the work of the Conference, to take a seat in the Council Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The secretariat informs me that the distinguished representative is not in the room. Dear colleagues, before we proceed with consultations on the programme of work, I would like to inform you that I have received a request from a delegation to address the Conference on Disarmament on behalf of the Group of 21. I propose that we give the floor to any delegations who wish to make statements or comments relating to matters unrelated to the draft programme of work, after which we can immediately continue with consultations on the programme of work. The first delegation on my list is the delegation of Iraq, who will make a statement on nuclear disarmament on behalf of the Group of 21. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Iraq.

Mr. Alkhateeb (Iraq): Mr. President, I have the honour of delivering the following statement on nuclear disarmament on behalf of the Group of 21:

Mr. President, the Group of 21 reiterates that the Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral negotiation body on disarmament, and in that context the Group stresses that the highest priority on the Conference of Disarmament agenda is nuclear disarmament.

The Group reiterates its deep concern at the danger posed to the survival of humankind by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use and proliferation will remain.

The Group reiterates its position, as conveyed in its previous statements to the Conference on Disarmament, and recalls the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, and the very first resolution of the General Assembly, resolution 1 (I) of 1946, adopted unanimously, which called for the elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals.

The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement that are members of the Group recall the 2012 Tehran summit declaration and the final document of the Non-Aligned Movement, the declaration and the final document of the seventeenth Summit of Heads of States and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, held on Isla de Margarita, Venezuela, in September 2016, as well as the final document of the eighteenth midterm ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, in April 2018.

Furthermore, the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 1996, concluded that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control. In this regard, the Group recalls its strong support for General Assembly resolution 73/64, entitled "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons".

The Millennium Declaration in 2000 also reaffirmed the commitment of Member States of the United Nations to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

The Group welcomes the formal proclamation, for the first time in history, of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace, on the occasion of the second summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held in Havana, Cuba, on January 2014, which includes the commitment of all States of the region to further nuclear disarmament as a priority goal and to contribute to general and complete disarmament. It is to be hoped that this proclamation will be followed by other political proclamations of zones of peace in other regions of the world. The Group welcomes the Political Declaration of Quito, adopted at the fourth summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Quito, Ecuador, on January 2016, which reaffirms, *inter alia*, the commitment of the Community to the preservation of peace and international security, political independence and nuclear disarmament conducive to general, total and verifiable disarmament. The Group also welcomes the Political Declaration of Punta Cana, adopted at the fifth summit of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, on January 2017, which reaffirms, *inter alia*, the commitment of the Community to achieve the total prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. CELAC reaffirms its commitment to the consolidation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace and highlights its character as the first-ever zone free of nuclear weapons, as established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The Group welcomes the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on 14 February 2017 in Mexico, within the framework of the twenty-fifth session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Group stresses the importance of effective implementation of concrete measures leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world. This requires renewed political will by the international community for accelerated progress on nuclear disarmament. The Group hopes that all States will seize all opportunities towards this end.

The Group welcomes the convening and results of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament on 26 September 2013 and reaffirms the related resolutions 70/34, 72/251 and 73/40 to follow up to this meeting. As the former Secretary-General of the United Nations rightly mentioned in the Conference on Disarmament in 2015, “the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament demonstrated that this issue remains a major international priority and deserves attention at the highest level”. In this vein, the Group fully supports the goals of these resolutions, in particular their call for an urgent decision by the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on nuclear disarmament, particularly 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. The Group also welcomes the decision to convene, in New York, no later than 2018, a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament to review the progress made in this regard. The Group welcomes with appreciation the establishment of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly organized every year to commemorate and promote this international day, highlighting the events around the world in commemoration of this day, and calls on Governments, parliaments and civil society to take further action annually to commemorate the day. In this context, the Group recalls its working papers contained in documents CD/2063, CD/2067 and CD/2133.

The Group reaffirms the importance of the multilateral disarmament machinery. It notes the report of the Open-ended Working Group mandated by the General Assembly “to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons” and hopes that it will contribute to negotiations on nuclear disarmament in

the Conference on Disarmament, particularly 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.

The Group takes note of the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July 2017 at the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, held from 27 to 31 March and 15 June to 7 July 2017 in New York, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/258.

The Group expresses its deepest concern over the immediate, indiscriminate and massive death and destruction caused by the detonation of any nuclear weapon and the long-term catastrophic consequences on human health, the environment and other vital economic resources, which would endanger the life of present and future generations. In this regard, the Group believes that the full realization of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons must underpin all approaches, efforts and international commitments in respect of nuclear disarmament, through an inclusive process involving all States.

The Group concurs with the former United Nations Secretary-General that there is a growing understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, and in this regard welcomes the hosting of the conferences on this subject, convened in Oslo in March 2013, in Mexico in February 2014 and in Vienna in December 2014.

The members of the Group of 21 that are States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) welcome the spirit of the finding of the conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, together with the pledges and national statements made by many States during and since the Vienna conference aimed at securing progress on nuclear disarmament through the negotiation of legally binding effective measures, particularly a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, with a specified framework of time. The members of the Group of 21 that are States parties to the Treaty call on all nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty to implement their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties are committed under article VI. Given the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and unacceptable risks and threats associated with the detonation of a nuclear weapon, the members of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Treaty will endeavour to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders in efforts to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Group notes the relevant resolutions adopted by the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

The Group, stressing its strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, underscores the urgent need to commence negotiations on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament without delay. In this context, the Group reaffirms its full readiness to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear-weapon convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, with a specified framework of time.

In this regard, the Group emphasizes that fundamental principles of transparency, verification and irreversibility shall be applied to all nuclear disarmament measures.

The Group reaffirms that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are substantively interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

The Group of 21 emphasizes that progress in nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, in all its aspects, is essential to strengthening international peace and security. The Group reaffirms that efforts towards nuclear disarmament, global and regional approaches and confidence-building measures complement each other and

should, wherever possible, be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security.

The Group reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Pending the achievement of the complete elimination of such weapons, the Group reaffirms the urgent need for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to effectively assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons as a matter of high priority. The Group expresses concern that despite the commitment of the nuclear-weapon States and long-standing requests by non-nuclear-weapon States to receive such legally binding assurances, no tangible progress has been achieved in this regard. It is a matter of more concern that non-nuclear-weapon States have been subject, implicitly or explicitly, to nuclear threats by some nuclear-weapon States, contrary to their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. The Group also calls for the commencement of negotiations in order to reach agreement on an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 73/74.

The Group expresses its concerns about the strategic defence doctrines of nuclear-weapon States and a group of States that set out rationales for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; in this regard, there is therefore a genuine and urgent need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies to minimize the risk that these weapons will ever be used again and to facilitate the process of their elimination. The Group recalls its strong support of the objectives of General Assembly resolution 73/56 of 5 December 2018, entitled “Reducing nuclear danger”, as well as General Assembly resolution 73/60, on decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems.

The Group of 21 stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, including by all nuclear-weapon States, which, inter alia, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. The Group reiterates that if the objective of the Treaty were to be fully realized, the continued commitment of all States signatories, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to nuclear disarmament would be essential.

The Group reaffirms the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in these areas. In this regard, the Group strongly supports the objectives of General Assembly resolution 73/41 of 5 December 2018, on the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The members of the Group of 21 that are States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons express their disappointment and deep concern that the three States parties, including two States that bear special responsibility as NPT depositaries and co-sponsor States of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference resolution on the Middle East, blocked consensus on the draft outcome document of the ninth NPT Review Conference, including the process to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as contained in the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. This could undermine efforts towards strengthening the NPT regime as a whole. The members of the Group of 21 that are States parties to the Treaty reaffirm that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East continues to constitute the basis for the establishment of such a zone and that the 1995 resolution remains valid until fully implemented. The members of the Group of 21 that are States parties to the Treaty also express their serious concern over the lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution and, in accordance with paragraph 6 of this resolution, call upon all States parties to the Treaty, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to extend their cooperation and to exert their utmost efforts with a view to ensuring the early establishment by regional parties of the Middle East zone free of nuclear and all weapons of mass destruction, and reaffirm that the co-sponsors of the resolution must take all the necessary measures

to fully implement it without further delay. The members of the Group of 21 that are States parties to the Treaty express their utmost concern that the persistent lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution, contrary to the decisions made at the relevant NPT review conferences, erodes the credibility of the Treaty and disrupts the delicate balance among its three pillars, taking into account that the indefinite extension of the Treaty is inextricably linked to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. In this context, the members of the Group of 21 that are States parties to the Treaty reaffirm the urgency of Israel's accession to the Treaty without further delay and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. While the lack of agreement on an outcome document could undermine the NPT regime, the members of the Group that are States parties to the Treaty emphasize the continued validity of all relevant commitments made in 1995, 2000 and 2010, particularly the unequivocal undertaking towards nuclear disarmament, and call for their full implementation without further delay.

The Group also wishes to reaffirm the inalienable right of each State to develop research production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

The Group reiterates its readiness to make constructive contributions to the work of the Conference, and in this regard wishes to recall the contents of documents CD/36/Rev.1, CD/116, CD/341, CD/819, CD/1388, CD/1462, CD/1570, CD/1571, CD/1923, CD/1938, CD/1959, CD/1999, CD/2044, CD/2063, CD/2099 and CD/2135, presented by the Group of 21 to this end.

The Group takes note of the substantive and interactive informal discussions on nuclear disarmament held in the Conference on Disarmament from 21 to 23 May 2014 pursuant to the schedule of activities of the 2014 session (contained in document CD/1978) on 11 and 18 June 2015 pursuant to the schedule of activities of the 2015 session (contained in document CD/2021) and from 8 to 10 August 2017 under the working group on the way ahead, established by the decision contained in document CD/2090.

In view of the Group's strong commitment to nuclear disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons, the Group reiterates the following concrete steps: (a) reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the complete elimination of nuclear weapons; (b) elimination of the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines; (c) adoption of measures by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger, such as de-alerting nuclear weapons and decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems; (d) negotiation of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to assure the non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; (e) negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, with a specified framework of time.

To conclude, Mr. President, the Group of 21 highlights with satisfaction the events that took place around the world to mark the commemoration of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, devoted to furthering this objective, including through enhancing public awareness and education about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the necessity of their total elimination, in order to mobilize international efforts towards achieving this goal. In this context, it calls upon member States to participate every year at the highest possible level in the one-day high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate and promote this international day and also invites Member States, the United Nations system, civil society, academia and parliamentarians, the mass media and individuals to take additional measures every year to commemorate this day.

I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of Iraq for his important statement. Does any other delegation wish to make any comments unrelated to the programme of work? It seems not, so I propose that we now proceed with consultations on the draft programme of work.

Distinguished colleagues, on Tuesday, 18 June 2019, the secretariat circulated the second revised version of the draft programme of work presented by the Venezuelan presidency. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those colleagues who participated in the consultations for their valuable contributions. I would like to provide an overview of the action taken by this presidency with regard to the Conference's programme of work and make an assessment of the current state of play.

As you know, the presidency of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela focused on developing a comprehensive and balanced programme of work in accordance with the responsibilities of the President, as set out in rule 29 of the Conference's rules of procedure. Our efforts were focused on intensive and extensive consultations during the four plenary meetings dedicated to that purpose and stimulating the creativity of delegations as much as possible. For this purpose, in addition to consultations on the programme of work, we held three informal thematic sessions aimed at covering all the agenda items of the Conference in the hope of establishing an interactive dialogue that would provide innovative ideas to facilitate the negotiation of a draft programme of work. During these consultations we had the opportunity to hear important proposals related to the agenda items of the Conference. We also heard the views of the coordinators of the 2018 subsidiary bodies, which enabled a collective and detailed evaluation to be made of the current situation in the Conference.

The participation and commitment of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research was instrumental in inserting innovative elements. In an effort to ensure transparency and inclusiveness, this presidency met with more than 30 delegations of States of the Conference, in the framework of approximately 40 meetings, and held four presidential consultations with the Presidents and four with the regional coordinators. We attached great importance to the presidential consultations with four of the other five Presidents and with the regional group coordinators, whose contributions and participation were crucial to fulfilling our mandate. Almost a month after intensive consultations, this second revised version is the fruit of constructive comments and valuable contributions from delegations during the plenary meetings of 13 and 18 June and the bilateral consultations with the regional groups. We also carried out informal consultations in this room on 18 June. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all colleagues who participated in those consultations for their valuable input.

Allow me now to mention the main features of this second revised version. First, we have noted that most delegations are dissatisfied with the preambular paragraphs. We have made a minor amendment to preambular paragraph 7. The references to the reports of the 2018 subsidiary bodies have been deleted so as not to call unnecessary attention to the absence of the report on negative security assurances, thus according equal treatment to the work of the 2018 subsidiary bodies. The reference to the decisions establishing those bodies and to the final report on the Conference's work in 2018, which reflects the work of the subsidiary bodies, has been retained. We took into consideration the demands of delegations who asked us to preserve the negotiating mandate, in accordance with the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which established the Conference on Disarmament. As a result, there has been a return to the negotiating mandate in each and every agenda item. In paragraphs 9 (b) and (e), we have tended towards the language proposed by the Syrian presidency in 2018. In paragraph 10, the working groups have been retained as a potential strategy from which the Conference may take advantage in accordance with rule 35 of the rules of procedure. Paragraphs 15 and 16 of the previous version have been deleted.

As you can see, this presidency has made intensive and sincere efforts to address the concerns of all delegations and to ensure the continuity of our work. However, it seems that member States should discuss the language we have proposed in greater detail. We have observed that the proposals for a new multi-year solution will only help to break the stalemate in the Conference if accompanied by a robust negotiating mandate. Otherwise, the Conference runs the risk of deepening the deadlock. Thus, we presented a version of the

programme of work that primarily focuses on preserving the negotiating mandate of the Conference and ensuring equal treatment for the components that make up the Conference's agenda.

We are well aware of the effort and challenge involved in reaching a consensus on a programme of work which it has not been possible to agree on or implement for the past 20 years. However, in my capacity as President of the Conference, we have identified the central issue on which consensus undoubtedly exists: the importance of overcoming the deadlock and producing a substantive programme of work in line with the Conference's mandate. The Venezuelan draft programme of work and its various versions are proof of the extreme and vigorous efforts of this presidency to achieve a consensus that is not possible at present.

I wish to express my deep gratitude for the extraordinarily constructive attitudes adopted by the majority of States, the coordinators of the 2018 subsidiary bodies, the Presidents of the Conference and the regional coordinators. Most delegations clearly understand that a consensus on the Conference's programme of work is the collective responsibility of all members. Reaching a consensus chiefly requires a political will to accept specific commitments regarding disarmament. It requires enormous flexibility, which has implications for the international and territorial security considerations of States. Having carried out this far-reaching exercise, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela finds itself increasingly worried by the likelihood that only a calamity of biblical proportions will lead to any significant progress being made in the negotiation of legally binding documents.

In this context, we deeply regret the failed attempts of a very small number of delegations to undermine the office of the President of the Conference with the aim not only of attacking Venezuelan democracy and its legitimate President, Nicolás Maduro, but also of deepening the current deadlock. Repeated violations by a few countries of the rules of procedure and of the systematic respect for the office of the President, such as the alphabetical rotation of its members and the accreditation rules and functions of the presidency, do not contribute to creating the necessary conditions for overcoming this unfortunate situation. In the light of the broad support that has been expressed for the substance of the draft proposed by the Venezuelan presidency, I will now ask the secretariat to register the document containing the draft programme of work as an official document of the Conference in the hope that future presidents may be able to take advantage of its content. We are certain that there is still much room for improvement.

Naturally, our assessment of our presidency is a positive one. Firstly, I have fulfilled my obligation as President of the Conference to present a programme of work and I have made concerted efforts to try to reach a consensus. Giving in to the difficulties associated with fulfilling that obligation and arguing that now is not the time to present a programme of work with a negotiating mandate would be tantamount to institutionalizing failure and abandoning the opportunities provided by this august forum's very existence. In this context, and in the opinion of the Venezuelan presidency, the main challenge encountered by this presidency in 2019 lies in attempts by certain delegations to make negotiations on substantive agenda items conditional on procedural issues.

Secondly, we have maintained a constructive atmosphere of respectful dialogue and professionalism in the Conference. We have shown that it is possible to hold a dialogue free of accusations and destructive politicization, despite all the existing bilateral geopolitical tensions and the strong natural polarization that exists between the doctrines of international and regional security. The Venezuelan presidency acted in a transparent manner and tried to listen to everyone's views. Thirdly, we can enthusiastically say that the broad and varied approach, as well as some specific proposals that found their expression in the different versions of the draft, succeeded in attracting the interest of many delegations because of its challenging and innovative nature.

To summarize, the Venezuelan presidency helped to narrow down our differences and bring our positions closer. We demonstrated an inclusive diplomacy that was respectful of the good manners that should accompany multilateral diplomacy. There has been broad space for coming together and disagreements have been limited. This can be demonstrated with a single, important example: of the vast majority of the 14 preambular and operative

paragraphs, of which 11 were draft programmes of work that we presented, there was understanding on almost all of them. Excellencies, we helped to create the conditions for the next presidencies to move in the only right direction: that of making progress towards the conclusion of agreements and of assembling the conditions for initiating substantive negotiations on legally binding instruments.

World peace requires the contribution of the Conference on Disarmament. Let us fight, as Fuente Ovejuna and El Cid said, for a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Peace is our motto. War, and in particular nuclear war, is a threat to humanity. The diplomacy of peace fostered by the Bolivarian Government of Nicolás Maduro is at the service of the greatest of humanity's causes at this historic time. We believe the advances made in our dialogues are significant, bearing in mind the gradual deterioration of the Conference. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a peace-loving nation and a staunch defender of multilateralism, for which reason my team and this speaker are deeply proud of our contribution. Our work and our hopes form an integral part of the heritage of this great Conference.

Kindly allow me to offer you the floor. It seems that no delegation wishes to take the floor. That brings us to the end of our work for today. Before concluding, allow me to reiterate our appreciation and gratitude to the ambassadors, colleagues and friends who offered their full support during this month of difficult work. I would like to give a special mention to our colleagues at the Conference secretariat – Ms. Anja Kaspersen, Ms. Radha Day and Ms. Silvia Mercogliano, among others – who have done an excellent and highly professional job of organizing our meetings. My constructive and transparent duties as President of the Conference would not have been possible without the invaluable support of Counsellor Carolina Díaz Mendoza and First Secretary Luisangela Andarcia. I thank them for their excellent technical support. We also wish to express our thanks to conference services and all the technical staff for their support in organizing our meetings. We also thank the interpreters, whose thorough preparation is a prerequisite for the existence and survival of multilateralism as we know it.

I wish also to express my warmest wishes to Ambassador Duong Chi Dung, Permanent Representative of Viet Nam, and Ambassador Taonga Mushayavanhu, Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe, who, with their proven expertise, will know how to manage the work of the presidency for the remainder of 2019. We hope that the six Presidents will carry out their work in the immediate future in the best spirit of cooperation and solidarity. On behalf of my Government and my team, I would like to take this opportunity, in my capacity as President of the Conference, to reaffirm our full cooperation and express my thanks to the delegations that motivated the work of our presidency.

Before closing this session, I wonder if the secretariat wishes to make any announcements. It seems not, so we can continue. Allow me to express my sincere thanks to my fellow Presidents, whose support during our presidency has been crucial. The next plenary session of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 25 June 2019, at 10 a.m., under the presidency of Viet Nam. I see that the distinguished Ambassador of Viet Nam, Mr. Duong Chi Dung has requested the floor. Sir, you have the floor.

Mr. Duong Chi Dung (Viet Nam): Thank you very much, Mr. President. At the outset, I would like to express our sincere thanks for your hard work and contributions in your capacity as the fourth President of the Conference on Disarmament this year. My delegation also highlights and highly appreciates all the goodwill and tireless efforts of your predecessors, particularly in preparing and presenting the draft programme of work as well as the consultations thereafter. However, it is unfortunate that, once again, there has been a failure to adopt the draft programme of work due to the lack of consensus among Conference members.

Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, the consistent standpoint of Viet Nam, as a strong supporter of peace, security and a world without nuclear weapons, is to move the mandate of the Conference forward by building a programme of work as the only way of breaking the current deadlock, while, in parallel, holding discussions on thematic items that will also contribute significantly to making progress on the substantive issues of the Conference.

In our view, this is how the work of the Conference must proceed. As the incoming President of the Conference, I would like to inform you of our plan of activities for the presidency of Viet Nam, which starts on 24 June 2019: first, our intention is to follow a dual-track plan of activities that is divided between the drafting of a programme of work and facilitating thematic discussions on the four core issues on the Conference agenda. Second, with regard to the first plenary meeting and also the opening meeting under the Vietnamese presidency, which will take place on 25 June 2019, we wish to inform the Conference that it is my intention to invite the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to address the Conference. The Secretary-General wishes to share with the Conference the views of ASEAN on disarmament and non-proliferation, with a focus on Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty).

In addition, this first plenary meeting will devote time to a farewell speech by the Conference on Disarmament's Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Møller, who is leaving his position in late June 2019. It is our great honour and privilege also to inform you that on Friday, 28 June, Ms. Karin Kneissl, the Foreign Minister of Austria, has accepted our invitation to attend the plenary meeting and will deliver a speech to the Conference. After her speech, the first discussion on thematic issues will follow, with a focus on agenda item 4, "Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons."

The following three weeks of the Vietnamese presidency will take the format of two sessions per week, one for discussion of the draft programme of work and one for the discussion of core issues one to three. This is the plan of activities we would like to inform the Conference of today. We highly appreciate and welcome all input and contributions from member States to this plan, the draft programme of work and the thematic discussions in order to effectively contribute to the advancement of the work of the Conference.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, let me conclude by once again thanking you and your predecessors for your hard work and positive contribution to the Conference. As for our coming presidency, we look forward to all member countries' support and cooperation, joining the efforts of our presidency to narrow down differences and work towards more substantive and fruitful outcomes for the Conference. This is an effective way to celebrate the Conference's fortieth anniversary this year. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Ambassador Duong Chi Dung, I wish you every success in your term as President and offer you the strong support of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which I have the honour to represent in this great Conference. Before concluding, I wonder if any delegations wish to take the floor. I recognize the Cuban delegation.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. We would like to thank the Venezuelan presidency for its efforts, for adhering to the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament and for its attempts to reach a consensus on a programme of work in order to fulfil this Conference's mandate. The debates adapted to the Conference's agenda items and the countless bilateral consultations carried out under this presidency have contributed to the successful development of our labours. Unfortunately, the lack of consensus, which has paralysed our work for 20 years, still persists. We have at least managed to interrupt, for the time being, the politicization of the work of this Conference, as well as the actions aimed at undermining the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I conclude by congratulating you on your presidency and assuring the distinguished Ambassador of Viet Nam of the full support of my delegation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Cuba for his words addressed to the presidency. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China. Sir, you have the floor.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Mr. President. The Chinese delegation congratulates the Venezuelan presidency on its smooth performance of the tasks of the presidency of the Conference. Under your leadership, the work of the Conference has returned to the right track in the last four weeks. You have organized the membership to discuss thematic issues and at the same time have continued efforts to hold consultations

and to achieve a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. In this process, the opinions of all parties have been respected. Although the proposal you have put on the table has not yet obtained the full agreement of all the members of the Conference, this process is of the utmost importance. In the course of this process, a number of colleagues have put forward some new ideas, for instance on the question of how, within the Conference's future programme of work or the arrangements for its substantive work, to adopt arrangements acceptable to all parties so as to ensure that the Conference's substantive work can maintain a degree of continuity and avoid the influence of extraneous political factors. I think that all of this can serve as a basis for the work of all Conference members during the remaining time we have this year. So I would like once again to congratulate you and your team on your work and to express our gratitude to the secretariat for its work as well.

We are also looking forward to cooperating with the Vietnamese presidency to further the Conference's work. The Chinese delegation will, as in the past, give full support to the Vietnamese delegation and presidency.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of China for his constructive comments and for his kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the delegation of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you Mr. President. We have closely observed your work and the Venezuelan delegation in general over the course of this month. In our view, the Venezuelan delegation has discharged its duties responsibly, especially in terms of seeking compromise on the programme of work. We thank the presidency for all the consultations it has organized during the month and also for its attentive and thoughtful consideration of the Russian delegation's proposals.

From our point of view, which is quite a demanding one, the proposed draft programme of work could very well have been endorsed by the States members of the Conference. Unfortunately, we once again missed the opportunity to adopt a programme of work and so move forward to negotiations on specific agenda items. In addition, it was a good attempt to narrow the gap between the positions of the member States and to find a middle ground that could serve as a basis for further work.

Unfortunately, the phenomenon of politicization has continued to have an adverse effect on the work of the forum. I would once again like to take the opportunity to express our position on this issue. We categorically reject the introduction in the context of this forum of political issues unrelated to either its work, its agenda or the problems we all see here today. I would also note, and here I align myself with my Chinese colleague, that a number of interesting and useful ideas were expressed during our discussions here, which could help us in our future search for ways to overcome the impasse of the Conference.

Finally, I reiterate my gratitude to the Venezuelan presidency for the work it has done and I wish the new President, the distinguished Ambassador of Viet Nam, every success and assure him that we are ready to work closely with his delegation on all the matters he will raise during his presidency.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his constructive comments and the kind words he addressed to the President. 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. My delegation expresses its thanks and appreciation for your attempts to achieve consensus on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work for the Conference and for the transparent and open approach that the Venezuelan presidency has taken during the meetings and discussions held to that end. My delegation regrets the current conditions and the politicization that have hindered the adoption of the draft programme of work proposed by the Venezuelan presidency and the resumption of the substantive work of the Conference.

The valuable efforts made by the Venezuelan presidency to bridge the divide between the opinions of member States exemplifies the professionalism, seriousness and responsibility that has characterized this presidency and reflects its eagerness to make

progress in the work of the Conference and overcome the stagnation in which it has been mired.

I once again wish to thank you, Ambassador Valero, and your very capable team, and I congratulate you on completing your tasks as President successfully and competently. I also wish to thank the secretariat and the interpreters for all their efforts, and I wish the upcoming Vietnamese presidency every success.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his words, especially those addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your successful completion of the presidency and in appreciating the hard work you put into discharging your duty and moving the Conference on Disarmament forward. Although the proposed programme of work did not achieve consensus, it is a starting point for resuming substantive work in the Conference and a good basis for continuing our consultations on its improvement and our eventual agreement under the subsequent presidencies.

My delegation wishes the Vietnamese Ambassador every success during his presidency and assures him of its readiness to cooperate fully with him in breaking the deadlock in the Conference.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for the words he addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Amin-Mansour (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. We worked closely with you and your team during the past month and found that you conducted the meetings and consultations in an inclusive, professional and transparent manner and did an excellent job. We congratulate you. You launched a large number of bilateral and multilateral consultations during your presidency, which were very fruitful, in my view, in attempting to narrow down the differences and trying to reach consensus. As everybody knows, reaching consensus in the Conference on Disarmament is very difficult, but the fact is that you did your job very well – you did your best.

You tried to draft the programme of work – as that was your main mandate – by incorporating all the views that you collected during the consultations, but, as everybody knows, it is very difficult to incorporate all views. You provided us with a revised draft of the programme, which is a very important document in our view. Although it did not enjoy consensus in the Conference, it can be used in the future by the other Presidents, who can build upon this draft for their work and try to make it more complete and reach consensus.

Unfortunately, during your presidency, the meetings of the Conference were politicized, as some of our dear colleagues noted, but you tried to escape from these conditions, narrow differences down and focus on the mandate of the Conference.

Once again, I congratulate you on finishing your job smoothly and peacefully and trying to create a friendly atmosphere in the Conference during your presidency. I wish you every success.

I would also like to congratulate the Ambassador of Viet Nam, the incoming President of the Conference, and assure him that he can count on our support during the upcoming meetings of the Conference.

I also forgot to thank you, Mr. President, and your dedicated team and colleagues, who were in close contact with other delegations. I thank the secretariat, who accompanied you and tried to provide you with assistance.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you for your constructive comments and for the words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the delegation of South Africa.

Mr. September (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate you for your stewardship of the Conference on Disarmament under your able and very professional leadership. The way that you have conducted consultations on the programme of work was inclusive and transparent. We commend you. We would also like to thank the secretariat and the interpreters for all their selfless efforts in supporting the Conference.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its support for any effort that will assist the Conference to get back to substantive work and focus on its mandate, which is to deliver on its responsibility as the single multilateral negotiating forum. Despite all the distractions, you remained focused, your proposed programme of work provided a good basis to build on and your efforts in this regard are highly appreciated. We maintain our position that there are several items that are ripe for negotiation and see no reason why these issues cannot be subject to negotiation in the Conference.

Our delegation stands ready to put our weight behind the incoming President, the Ambassador of Viet Nam, in any other initiatives that will get the Conference on Disarmament back to work.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we wish you well and would like to thank you for all of your efforts, which were well appreciated.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of South Africa for his comments and for his appraisal of this presidency. I now give the floor to the delegation of Egypt.

Mr. Elsayed (Egypt): Thank you, Mr. President. Allow me at the outset to express my sincere appreciation for all the strenuous efforts and your stewardship of the Conference on Disarmament during your presidency.

I would like to seize this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation of your colleagues and your delegation and the members of your team, who have been very understanding, accommodating and considerate during your tenure as President of the Conference, and, of course, of the secretariat and the translation services.

Mr. President, we thank you for the several draft programmes of work that you have presented and for the wide consultations that you have held with the different delegations, including mine, and with different geographical groupings as well. We also thank you for organizing thematic discussions under the agenda items of the Conference.

Mr. President, in general, we believe that the proposed programme of work is carefully drafted and accommodates the concerns of different delegations; yet it could not garner consensus. Once again, we thank and commend you for the way that you have steered the work and discharged your duties: in a professional manner and in accordance with the rules of procedure. We reiterate our readiness to work with all delegations of the Conference and contribute to efforts to resume substantive work as soon as possible.

Finally, I would like to seize this opportunity to wish the incoming President of the Conference, the Ambassador of Viet Nam, the best of luck and assure him of our delegation's full support.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Egypt for his comments and for the words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the delegation of Algeria.

Mr. Berkat (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation wishes to express its most sincere thanks and congratulations to both you and your team for all that you have achieved during your presidency of the Conference. We commend your contribution to the efforts to restart the substantive work of the Conference and we appreciate the consultations that you held both with the delegations and with the regional groups.

Mr. President, despite the lack of consensus, the programme of work which you proposed, like those proposed by your predecessors, will nonetheless help facilitate the Conference's work. I take this opportunity to assure the incoming presidency of Viet Nam

of my delegation's full support. I would also be remiss if I did not thank the secretariat and the interpreters for their unceasing efforts to support the work of the Conference.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Algeria for his comments and his words addressed to the presidency. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I do not see any other delegation wishing to speak. We have therefore reached the end of our business for today. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.