

# Conference on Disarmament

English

---

**Final record of the one thousand three hundred and seventy-fourth plenary meeting**


Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 16 February 2016, at 10.05 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Peters Omologbe Emuze ..... (Nigeria)

GE.17-02930 (E) 190417 200417



\* 1 7 0 2 9 3 0 \*

Please recycle 

**The President:** I call to order the 1374th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, Mr. Møller, Ms. Soliman, ladies and gentlemen, last week I shared with you an informal draft proposal for a programme of work for our current session. I am grateful for all the constructive feedback and suggestions that I have received. The document has now been issued under the symbol CD/WP.594 and will serve as a basis for discussion in today's plenary meeting. I hope that it can be adopted as a programme of work for this year's session.

Before going to the substantive part of today's plenary meeting, I would like to share with you the information from the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament that Ambassador Mouayed Saleh of Iraq has submitted his letter of credentials on 4 February. Please join me in welcoming Ambassador Saleh to our midst.

Please allow me now to briefly summarize the main elements of the proposal before you for a programme of work.

First, I would like to read out a brief statement before going into the details:

Over the course of the past few weeks, before and after the commencement of my presidency, I have held extensive consultations with delegates on the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament and on the core agenda issues of this Conference. I have also had cause to address delegates in their regional blocs. All this has been done towards finding a road map on how the Conference can break the logjam that has stalled negotiations over the past two decades. During the process, I received various ideas and suggestions on how to move this process forward. I thank delegations for receiving me and for the brilliant ideas they have proffered. Interestingly, while there appears to be so much disagreement among the delegations in the content of their statements, I also saw willingness for the Conference to continue its work. The issue is how to continue when there is no unanimity of purpose on the mandate of the Conference. In our situation, where every group considers one item riper than another for negotiation, it will be difficult to have unanimity. An assumption that one item was good for discussion and another for negotiation failed, as was evident from 1991 onwards. Last year, the attempt to negotiate and another attempt to use informal working groups did not yield the expected unanimity. This is why our draft programme of work underscored the primacy of discussions with a view to identifying, elaborating and recommending effective measures on each of the four core agenda items of the Conference in a formal setting. If everyone projects his or her national interests over global interests, it will lead us nowhere; if we do not give something, we cannot get something. This is the major problem that has stalled negotiations over time. Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the process of treaty making is onerous. If the contents are not first discussed exhaustively, they cannot be negotiated, let alone drafted. In the light of getting this Conference back to work, it was our view that — given past attempts and methods that have yielded no dividends — we felt that the way forward, after a series of consultations, is a draft decision on the programme of work, which the secretariat circulated to you on 11 February 2016 and which is before you now.

I thank you, and I shall now give the floor to delegates who wish to speak. I call on the Republic of Iraq. Ambassador Mouayed Saleh, you have the floor.

**Mr. Saleh** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Excellencies, distinguished Permanent Representatives, I am most grateful to you for your kind words of welcome. It is indeed a pleasure for me to address the Conference on Disarmament for the first time and I am honoured to be here today in this esteemed international multilateral forum in order to express the importance that the Government of the Republic of Iraq attaches to the Conference and the significant role it plays. I reaffirm not only our commitment to the ideals of multilateralism, which strengthens the international community's collective responsibility in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, but also the ambition of Iraq to serve as a

stabilizing element in the regional and international environment without in any way increasing global tension and instability.

The Government of Iraq attaches great importance to the question of general and complete disarmament since it is aware that the arms race, far from bringing peace and security, is a principal cause of tension and instability. The commitment of the Government of Iraq to the treaties and agreements on disarmament and non-proliferation is based on its belief that universal accession to, and compliance with, the international agreements and treaties on weapons of mass destruction, without any exception, as well as the total elimination of such weapons, constitute a fundamental and real assurance to the international community concerning the non-use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction and the achievement of international peace and security by reaching joint and practical solutions, through multilateral negotiations, for the conclusion of collective agreements. Accordingly, Iraq has acceded to all the principal disarmament treaties and has affirmed its full commitment to the implementation of all their provisions and requirements. Iraq attaches special importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, which has a record of previous successes. Unfortunately, however, the Conference is currently at a decisive turning point and is passing through an extremely complicated period due to escalating regional crises, terrorist threats, increasing risks of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the present deadlock in the field of disarmament. All these factors are jeopardizing international stability, diverting resources away from constructive objectives and impeding the achievement of tangible progress in the fields of economic and human development and capacity-building. For almost two decades, the Conference has been unable to perform its mandated role to negotiate disarmament treaties owing to its failure to reach an agreement on a programme of work. Consequently, we need to intensify our endeavours to agree on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that will respond to the concerns of all member States in a manner consistent with the rules of procedure and achieve progress on the issues included on the Conference's agenda. It is our hope that the member States will reach agreement on a programme of work during the Conference's session in 2016 in order to move forward towards our disarmament goals and take advantage of the advances and successes achieved in the current international environment. I would like to take this opportunity to refer to the twin-track endeavours that Iraq made during its presidency of the 2013 session of the Conference to break the deadlock in which the Conference found itself and enable it to resume its substantive technical work in accordance with its mandate and rules of procedure. Those endeavours led to the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/1956/Rev.1 of 16 August 2013, in which provision was made for the establishment of an informal working group to produce a programme of work for the Conference.

Iraq shares the view expressed by many States concerning the need to keep nuclear disarmament as the Conference's top priority in the light of the special status accorded to it in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, and in conformity with the findings of the International Court of Justice, which, in its advisory opinion issued in 1996, stated that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict and that States had an obligation to negotiate in good faith with a view to achieving full nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control. We therefore wish to re-emphasize that complete nuclear disarmament should be our top priority, since, given the destructive nature of such weaponry, its total and definitive elimination is essential in order to ensure the survival of humankind as a whole and its continued existence poses a threat to international peace and security. In this regard, however, I wish to reaffirm the inalienable right of States, and particularly developing States, to develop, create and use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes in order to achieve economic growth, without discrimination or hindrance, provided that their activities are subject to oversight by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the requirements of the non-proliferation regime.

Mr. President, please allow me to express our viewpoint on the core issues on the Conference's agenda and, in particular, on the four issues relating to the programme of work:

1. With regard to nuclear disarmament, inasmuch as technological advances in this field will unquestionably increase the danger of an ongoing arms race, this issue should remain one of the Conference's main priorities. Iraq therefore encourages any efforts or negotiations among States possessing such weapons to agree on a significant reduction of nuclear arsenals. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones would also be highly instrumental in furthering nuclear disarmament endeavours.

2. With regard to negative security assurances, there is a need to reach agreement on a legally binding international instrument under which nuclear-weapon States would give unconditional assurances that they would not use or threaten to use such weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Potential means to achieve that goal would also need to be defined. Although negative security assurances are a key element and would constitute an important step towards that goal, since they are a fair and legitimate demand on the part of the non-nuclear-weapon States which have voluntarily renounced any nuclear military options by acceding to the Treaty, they cannot be considered as an alternative to the goal of complete nuclear disarmament.

3. With regard to the production of fissile material, the continued production of such material poses a threat to the achievement of the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and, consequently, Iraq supports the idea of a negotiating mandate for the drafting of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for the purpose of the manufacture of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

4. With regard to outer space, we share the view of member States that outer space is the common heritage of humankind and should be explored solely for peaceful purposes, since its militarization would lead to a costly and destructive arms race and that must be prevented. The Conference on Disarmament should consider the adoption of an international instrument to prevent the militarization of outer space.

Mr. President, Iraq reaffirms its support for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world as an important step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Through you, we call upon the international community to implement the resolution concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East — which was adopted at the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review and Extension Conference — in conformity with the action plan contained in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, as a fundamental element in this regard. Iraq also wishes to express its disappointment at the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference to adopt a final document, which places us under a responsibility to intensify our collective efforts to ensure the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The failure of international endeavours to convene a conference, scheduled to be held in Helsinki in December 2012, on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East constitutes a breach of the commitments made in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference. That failure will have a detrimental effect on the credibility of the NPT and will also have adverse consequences for the review process and the nuclear non-proliferation system as a whole.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the efforts made by Mr. Michael Møller, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and the Presidents of this year's Conference to again enable the Conference on Disarmament to play a real and effective role in addressing issues relating to disarmament and non-proliferation. You may count on the support and backing of Iraq for your plans. We wish you and the other Presidents every success in your tasks.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Iraq for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

At this stage, I would like to explain the draft programme of work that is before you, before I give the floor to other delegates who may wish to speak.

As you can see in the document before you, this draft decision on the programme of work is supposed to establish a balanced and comprehensive programme. We have decided to pick just the four core issues out of the eight core agenda items of the Conference on

Disarmament. We have received a lot of ideas and counsel on the whole issue before we came to this. I wish also to inform you that the four working groups which are contained in the draft document before you also have coordinators, which this plenary is going to address. Nevertheless, this is supposed to be in a formal setting and the number of working days for each of the groups will be 10 days; and, of course, a schedule of activities will be presented to you as soon as the draft document is adopted.

I will now give the floor to delegates who wish to speak. On my list I have the Ambassador of South Africa. Ms. Ncumisa Notutela, you have the floor.

**Ms. Mancotywa-Kumsha** (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. Unfortunately, I am not the Ambassador of South Africa, and my name is Simbongile Mancotywa-Kumsha, not Ncumisa: could you please correct that?

**The President:** That is what I have on the list here. We will correct that.

**Ms. Mancotywa-Kumsha** (South Africa): Mr. President, since this is the first time that South Africa is taking the floor under your presidency, my delegation would like to commend you for your efforts in getting the Conference on Disarmament back to work and would like to assure you of the full support and cooperation of South Africa towards a successful conclusion of your presidency.

As we are all aware, the Conference on Disarmament has been in a stalemate for almost two decades. The Conference cannot afford to waste yet another year without reaching consensus on a programme of work, as this will not only further undermine its credibility but also raise questions about its relevance. In general, South Africa has always been supportive of all efforts that endeavour to get the Conference back to work and pave the way towards negotiations, as long as they do not undermine our principal policy priority of nuclear disarmament. Like others, we believe that the primary responsibility of each Conference session is to adopt a programme of work with a view to commencing substantive work. This forum has been established for the purpose of conducting multilateral disarmament negotiations, and anything short of this means that it is not discharging its mandate.

We regret that the operative text of the draft programme of work does not include the word “negotiate”. We, nevertheless, stand ready to join consensus in the hope that the work of the subsidiary bodies would lead to the commencement of negotiations on legally binding effective measures, particularly on nuclear disarmament. We therefore call on all Conference members to ensure that the reports of the coordinators contain concrete recommendations towards the adoption of legally binding effective measures, including on nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, we hope that the envisaged discussions will not become yet another repetitive exercise in which Conference members simply repeat their well-known positions, as this may add to the impression that some Conference members are using such mechanisms simply to create an illusion of progress in the Conference. It is our hope that 2016 will indeed be a year of business “not as usual” in the Conference, so that confidence in this body can be restored.

**The President:** I thank the representative of South Africa for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of Ethiopia, Mr. Degemu Maruta.

**Mr. Maruta** (Ethiopia): Mr. President, as this is the first time the Ethiopian delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, we would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the functions of President of the Conference on Disarmament and we wish you success in your tasks. We are confident that your experience will help to move the Conference forward in a positive manner. You can certainly count on the full support and cooperation of the Ethiopian delegation.

Ethiopia is of the conviction, as before, that nuclear weapons pose the gravest danger to humanity and to international peace and stability, and the best assurance against their use or threat of their use is their complete elimination.

It is indeed frustrating to witness that, despite the many efforts made thus far, no progress has been made to reach consensus on a programme of work. The substantive

discussion on the agenda items and the establishment of an informal working group with a mandate to produce a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time have not yet produced the expected results. We believe that we need to continue to work hard and are hopeful that all members will demonstrate the necessary political will in order to ensure the commencement of substantive work in the Conference.

Mr. President, Ethiopia has been a member of the Conference since its inception. We value very much its role as the world community's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The Conference fulfils a unique function by bringing together all multilaterally significant States. The mandate of this Conference is to undertake negotiations on treaties of universal application and it works on the principle of consensus. However, it is unfortunate that the Conference has been prevented, on one unconvincing pretext or another, from commencing substantive work. Hence, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, stated in his speech at the Monterey Institute in 2013: the credibility of this body is at risk. We have spent much of our time in this chamber for the last 20 years focusing on discussions and exchanging views, so it is time to demonstrate our strong political will and chart new paths together to bring the Conference back to negotiations.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Ethiopia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China, Mr. Fu Cong.

**Mr. Fu Cong (China):** Mr. President, it is good to know that you have conducted extensive consultations on your proposal. For our part, since we did not have the privilege of being consulted privately, I will make my views known publicly.

*(spoke in Chinese)*

The Chinese delegation would like to express its appreciation, Mr. President, for your efforts to break the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. After a preliminary review of the draft programme of work that you have presented, we have the following comments to make at this point.

First, regardless of whether we hold discussions or negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, the Conference should continue to be guided by the mandate contained in the Shannon report. The important outcome contained in that report was hard-won; abandoning it would deprive us of a clear orientation for our work. In addition, the proposed wording on elaborating and recommending effective measures on fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices is overly vague and risks widening rather than narrowing differences among those taking part in the negotiations.

Second, the prompt negotiation and conclusion of an international legal instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space is supported by an overwhelming majority of the members of the Conference. It is therefore time to move beyond simple discussions on the outer space issue and entrust the working group with a negotiating mandate.

Third, the Conference should take a balanced approach to all the various issues relating to disarmament. Aside from the four core agenda items, the other three items are also worthy of discussion. Given the current pace at which technology is developing and the repercussions for arms control, the matter of new types of weapons of mass destruction is of the utmost importance and should be discussed in detail. The Conference's programme of work should follow established practice, and a special coordinator should be named to solicit views from member States or organize discussions on the other three agenda items.

Fourth, we take note of the increasing number of countries requesting observer status in the work of the Conference and of the rising calls for expansion of the membership. We should establish a formal subsidiary body on the question of the expansion of membership and work actively to achieve prompt progress in that regard.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. Actually, I tried to reach you — I placed many telephone calls to your office — but I did not have the favour of a reply.

I now call on the representative of Iran. Mr. Heidari, you have the floor.

**Mr. Heidari** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, since this is the first time this delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, at the outset let me congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at its 2016 session and express our appreciation for the able manner in which you are presiding over the Conference. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

Mr. President, with regard to today's deliberations and your invitation to exchange views on your programme of work proposal, we pay tribute to your best efforts and desire and, in particular, to your esteemed country's pledge to make every effort to see the adoption of a programme of work for the 2016 session of the Conference. That manifests the good intentions and genuine energy that you have put into conducting consultations in a very inclusive and transparent manner to give the Conference new momentum. We fully recognize such ingenuity that Nigeria, as a member of the Group of 21, is showing in its responsibility as the first President of the Conference for 2016.

We have considered this proposed programme of work with an open mind and much interest. Therefore, our first reaction to it is positive: you have given fair and equal treatment to the four core issues. It is worth mentioning that the proposal addresses the four core agenda items of the Conference in a very balanced approach, including nuclear disarmament, which has been a constant position of all Group of 21 members for as long as the Conference has been in existence. The Group has emphasized in its position the need to negotiate as early as possible 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.

We believe this proposal is a pragmatic programme of work which could enable the Conference to start its substantive work on any of its four core agenda issues in 2016.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Iran for his statement and the kind words addressed to the President. At this stage, I would like to ask if there are any other delegates who wish to take the floor. I recognize Ambassador Varma of India.

**Mr. Varma** (India): Mr. President, we would like to commence our remarks this morning by conveying our very deep appreciation for all your hard work and that of your delegation as the first President of the 2016 annual session. You have a major responsibility and you have taken on that responsibility with vigour; and you have tried, to the best of your ability, to see how the Conference on Disarmament can move forward.

We would also like to take this opportunity to formally welcome Ambassador Saleh of Iraq, who has just joined us. We assure him of the full cooperation of the Indian delegation.

Mr. President, we would like to thank you for your proposal that has now been circulated as a working paper in document CD/WP.594. It is true that you have conducted consultations and we were one of those delegations which benefited from those consultations. We see your proposal as taking the Conference forward in the right direction, which is the following: given the difficulties that we are facing — which you have yourself encountered — in establishing a programme of work acceptable to the Conference to discharge its core responsibility, which is the negotiation and conclusion of legally binding instruments, the next best way forward is what has been flagged in the report of the informal working group that met last year under the efficient chairmanship of the Ambassador of Finland, Mr. Järviäho, which submitted a report in document CD/2033, which you have rightly included in the draft decision for a programme of work for the 2016 session.

The second positive feature that you have attempted in your draft is to focus on the four core agenda items. Of course, the notion of four core agenda items is something that the Conference has referred to in various documents and individual delegations have spoken of over the years. In our view, while all agenda items of the Conference are important, some — in our view — have greater urgency than others and some — in our view — have greater feasibility than others. From the point of view of India, and this is consistent with the point of view of the Group of 21 and the Non-Aligned Movement as a whole, we of course attach priority to the agenda item with reference to nuclear

disarmament. In terms of feasibility and the practicality of commencing negotiations, we have always maintained that the Conference should commence negotiations on the prohibition of production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. There is, I think, a long-standing mandate that has been available for the Conference — having been accepted by the Conference — for a number of years. It no longer meets with the consensus of the entire Conference, but it is still a mandate that has been strongly supported by a number of delegations. That leaves us with the task of dealing with the other agenda items. As we had said in our previous statement, there is strong support for working on outer space and on negative security assurances — strong support that has been extended by the General Assembly, including in the resolutions that were adopted in December 2015.

Taking all these factors into account, I think your draft definitely moves in the right direction and we thank you for your efforts in that regard. However, at the present juncture we believe that this draft requires further work. We have referred it to our capital and we are awaiting fuller instructions, but as some preliminary comments we would like to indicate the following.

In the preambular section, there is a need to make reference to the agenda for this year, which is contained in document CD/2052, and a reference to the rules of procedure: since this is a formal document, some reference to the rules of procedure should be there. In our view, a preambular paragraph could possibly read as follows:

*In pursuance of its agenda contained in document CD/2052, and in accordance with, and in full respect of, its rules of procedure,*

The second change we would like to suggest is in the second-but-last preambular paragraph, which talks about enabling future compromises, including the possibility of future negotiations. We would like to insert after “future negotiations” the words “and the conclusion of legally binding instruments”. We must all agree — and this was reaffirmed in document CD/2033 and consistent with the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament — that the purpose of this body is to conclude legally binding instruments, and I think that a reference there would be appropriate. A more stylistic change: in the last preambular paragraph, it says “takes the following decisions”, I think we could be more specific by saying “takes the following decisions for the establishment of the programme of work for the current session”. These are some of the topics and suggestions that we have for the preambular section.

With reference to the operative section and the mandates that you have put forward, I would like to emphasize that we are still studying this in our capital and we reserve the right to come back with any suggestions that our capital would like us to put forward. Right away, we think we have considerable sympathy for the point made by the Ambassador of China, with respect to operative paragraph 2, on the issue of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. I think that is a point that we can fully support.

Lastly, Mr. President, and this is something that we have ourselves mentioned in our bilateral consultations, and we thank you for making the effort to pursue the point that we had put forward, is the fact that the Conference has had an opportunity in the last couple of years to establish informal structured discussions. We recognize the fact that this is a decision not for structured informal discussions but discussions of a formal nature, which will result in a document that will be subject to the rules of procedure of this Conference. Having said that, we would like you to explore, to the extent possible, the possibility of rotation of the coordinators. There is nothing written in stone that particular agenda items should be dealt with only by particular groups. We should give it a shot to see how we can benefit from a rotation of coordinators for the different agenda items. We are aware that this is not always feasible, but we would like to question this notion that certain agenda items are topics that naturally belong to a particular group — that applies to the group that India belongs to, which is the Group of 21 — but we would like you to further explore this with respect to rotation. We will, of course, be very happy to take part in consultations that you may wish to organize during the remaining part of your presidency or if you wish to hand this over to your successor. We will, of course, remain at your disposal on how you wish to take this forward.



To conclude, we thank you for your proposal. I think it is a proposal that takes us in the right direction. It has a number of positive elements. It can be improved with a view to making it more rounded and adding clarity, especially in its substantive portion. We are aware that, having made these suggestions, there may be others who also wish to make suggestions. We are fully prepared to listen to them, and once this document is more fully formed, it remains your prerogative or the prerogative of your successor, the Ambassador of Norway, to take a decision or to take a view on how best this can be taken forward.

**The President:** I thank the representative of India for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now call on the Ambassador of Switzerland. Mr. Urs Schmid, you have the floor.

**Mr. Schmid** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by expressing my sincere appreciation for the way in which you are carrying out your duties and for your efforts to enable the Conference on Disarmament to overcome the stalemate that has beset it for so many years.

Before addressing some specific Conference-related issues, let me first echo a number of comments made in this forum over the past few weeks. In particular, I am pleased to note the developments that have taken place in recent months, such as the initial implementation of the nuclear agreement between Iran and China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States of America earlier this year, as well as the progress made in setting up structures for the Arms Trade Treaty and our work in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

These developments should not, however, distract us from the important challenges that face us in the spheres of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and international security. Here, the recent events in the Korean Peninsula are cause for grave concern. The Swiss authorities have condemned the nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 6 January inasmuch as it was a violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions, it poses a threat to regional peace and security and it undermines the international community's efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, especially the efforts undertaken to promote the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Switzerland is convinced that a solution to the Korean nuclear and security issue can be found only through diplomatic negotiations and it stands ready to consider any proposal that might contribute to the effort to promote stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula.

In this uncertain international environment, it is more important than ever that the Conference should fulfil its mandate. Breaking the Conference's deadlock of almost 20 years must now be made a priority. Otherwise, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations stressed in his statement to the Conference earlier this year, it may become completely marginalized.

Against such a backdrop, we welcome the efforts being undertaken to enable the Conference to move forward as we embark on this new session.

First, we note that proposals seeking to reframe long-held positions have been formulated. Although these proposals have not enabled us to move forward immediately, they show a willingness to explore new avenues, and that is encouraging.

In addition, we thank the presidency for the draft programme of work submitted for our consideration. While the proposal does focus on the four core issues on the agenda, it does not include a negotiating mandate. It is true that this approach differs from the one followed for some time now, but it is not a precedent: the Conference operated in this way during the period up to 1996.

Should the proposed programme of work enjoy unanimous support, Switzerland will gladly add its voice to the consensus. In absolute terms, however, we would prefer a more ambitious programme of work. Having long expressed its willingness to engage in negotiations on the four core issues on the agenda, Switzerland is of the view that a programme of work should either launch negotiations or enable us to make real progress in that direction. Even in the absence of negotiations, a programme of work could aim to do more than merely continue with discussions. For instance, it could call for effective

measures actually to be identified, elaborated and recommended. It could also be more ambitious with regard to the type of measures that should receive priority attention, that is to say, legally binding standards.

Regardless of the decision that the Conference takes on the draft programme of work, two aspects seem crucial as it seeks to define its activities for 2016.

First, the Conference should aim to do more than just repeat the formulas of years past. While the discussions held under successive schedules of activities have not been without interest, they are not enough in and of themselves in the sense that they do not enable the Conference to move forward on substance. This problem relates in particular to the informal nature of the schedule of activities and the consequent lack of consensus-based outcome documents at the end of the process, which would make it easier to follow an iterative process from one year to the next.

Second, the Conference has to give consideration to the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, which was established by the General Assembly at its seventieth session pursuant to the resolution entitled "Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations." The notion of complementarity must sit at the centre of our considerations. This applies as much to establishing each body's calendar of meetings as it does to making use of Conference funds to finance the Working Group's 15 days of work. With regard to substance, and in view of the fact that the Working Group has been given a clear mandate, the question arises as to the added value of any work that the Conference might undertake.

The Conference has become increasingly marginalized owing to its failure to make progress on substance for many years, but that is not the only reason. The marginalization also stems from its outdated approaches in a number of areas that need to be addressed if we genuinely hope to revitalize the Conference.

The enlargement of the membership is the first matter that must be considered. This issue is becoming more pressing every year, with some States having sought admission to the Conference for several decades. Giving these States a positive answer would serve to strengthen the central role that the Conference plays in the field of disarmament. Moreover, the Conference's rules of procedure require that its membership be reviewed at regular intervals and no convincing argument has been put forward to explain why this rule should not be applied. In this regard, the launch of a structured process for the enlargement of the membership of the Conference should be a priority for 2016.

Interaction with civil society is another area where progress is needed. The terms on which civil society participates in the Conference are particularly restrictive, if not unique, for a body that plays such a central role in the multilateral world. The fact that the only non-governmental organization which was still regularly following the work of the Conference decided to stop doing so last year should be a cause for concern. The Conference would benefit strongly from enhanced interaction with civil society as that would allow it to extend its own influence and at the same time receive substantive contributions. We welcome the organization last year of the informal Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Michael Møller, and believe that the Conference must urgently develop procedures that increase the involvement of civil society in its work.

A third area we should address is the review of our working methods. This suggestion is not a new one. The Conference used to undertake such assessments on a regular basis, that is to say, in the period before the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. At the time, the Conference ensured that its work was conducted in the most effective way possible and it is not clear why it should no longer do so today.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Switzerland for his kind words addressed to the President. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the representative of Russia.

**Mr. Deyneko** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I had not planned to take the floor today, but, as the matter of the programme of work that you prepared has been brought up for discussion, I considered it necessary to do so.

Allow me to begin with an observation regarding protocol. I join other delegations in stating that informal consultations on your draft were not held with our delegation individually or with the Eastern European Group. The introduction of a draft for official consideration in plenary is usually preceded by informal consultations of that kind. We hope that they will take place. We are ready to engage with you in any setting — individually or collectively — as you see fit and as your schedule permits. We are prepared to adopt a fairly flexible approach.

With regard to content, as has been noted earlier, the draft that you have presented contains a number of new features. I would like to point out that the discussion mandate providing for group discussions on the four core agenda items bears a strong resemblance to the proposals or informal suggestions that the Russian delegation has been putting forward over the previous few years. As indicated by other speakers, operative paragraph 2 on a treaty banning the production of fissile material has been changed substantively and our delegation, like others, naturally needs time in which to analyse the implications of these changes.

Overall, however, we are ready to work constructively with you, Mr. President, and with our colleagues at the Conference on Disarmament, be it in a formal or, as we would prefer at first, informal setting, and we look forward to constructive engagement.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Russia, Mr. Deyneko, for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of Pakistan.

**Ms. Janjua** (Pakistan): Mr. President, we take this opportunity to thank you very much for all of your efforts. We appreciate your proactive approach as President of the Conference on Disarmament. You have conducted extensive consultations and made sincere efforts to advance the Conference's agenda. We thank you very much in this regard and we thank you for consulting us in your process of consultation.

We have taken note of the draft programme of work circulated by you last Friday envisaging the establishment of four working groups with the mandate to carry out formal substantive discussions on the Conference's four core issues. The proposal, we believe, builds on the positive experience of the schedule of activities pursued during the last two years in the Conference, which featured useful informal discussions on the substantive issues. We have transmitted your draft proposal to our capital and are awaiting further discussions. I can share with you that the proposal in its present form is undergoing positive consideration. We expect that any proposal that will be tabled in the Conference will be based on consensus which takes into account concerns of all members of the Conference.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan for her kind words to the President. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico. Mr. Lomónaco, you have the floor.

**Mr. Lomónaco** (Mexico): Mr. President, we are all aware of the urgency of beginning negotiations, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations reminded us in his message of 20 January 2015, and I quote: "Ultimately, the effectiveness of the Conference will be judged on a single criterion: its ability to conclude disarmament treaties."

Moving forward in fulfilling the mandate of this body requires compromise from everyone, but that does not mean that we could — or should — ignore the nature of this forum. The mandate of the Conference was set by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and there is absolutely no need for redefining it. Taking up substantive work at the Conference on Disarmament means to negotiate. Allow me to recall also that at that special session it was agreed that, and I quote: "For maximum effectiveness, two kinds of bodies are required in the field of disarmament — deliberative and negotiating." It was also agreed that, and I quote again: "All Member States should be represented on the former, whereas the latter, for the sake of convenience," — for the sake of convenience, that is to say, not to protect any particular interest — "should have a relatively small membership".

The distinction between a deliberative and a negotiating body is clear and there is no doubt that the Conference on Disarmament is the negotiating body in the disarmament machinery. There are other bodies that are meant to function as deliberative organs.

On your proposal, Mr. President, despite the good intentions behind this proposal on a draft decision for the establishment of a programme of work for the 2016 session presented by yourself, we believe it has the potential to damage the Conference on Disarmament, not only for the 2016 session but for many years down the road. I will explain why. After 20 years of paralysis, supporting a proposal on a programme of work which does not contain a negotiating mandate would not contribute to breaking the paralysis in disarmament negotiations and would undermine even more the credibility of the Conference as a negotiating forum, and I keep stressing the words “negotiating forum”. The challenge is not just to adopt a programme of work — any programme of work — as an end in itself. The real challenge is to start disarmament negotiations on the items of our agenda. As long as we fail to do this, the Conference is failing collectively.

On the other hand, the current draft decision for the establishment of a programme of work does not represent substantive work for the Conference. This proposal is a way to keep the diplomatic community busy in discussions — not working on multilateral disarmament negotiations, which is the mandate of this body. It would therefore formalize the demise of the Conference for the year in only the third week of meetings. The proposal is, at best, what we have called in the Conference, a schedule of activities — not a programme of work. To call it a programme of work is misleading and would therefore set a terrible precedent creating incentives for future presidencies to settle for non-negotiating mandates in the programmes of work for many years to come, abandoning the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament for good. If the current presidency does not believe it can achieve the adoption of a programme of work with a negotiating mandate, it should allow for the next presidencies to exert all efforts towards this end rather than prevent it. The only way in which the Conference will recover its relevance as a negotiating forum is by starting negotiations on disarmament, not by keeping it artificially busy. As is well known by the membership, my country believes that initiatives which do not contribute to the relevance of the Conference as a negotiating forum, such as this one, are a distraction and constitute a simulation of work.

In conclusion, my delegation considers that adopting a decision on a programme of work without a deliberative mandate will not only create a harmful precedent for the Conference on Disarmament as a negotiating body but will prevent other presidencies from making any progress.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement, which is well noted. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this time? That does not seem to be the case.

I understand from delegations that we have not yet reached a consensus on the adoption of a programme of work. I also understand that some of you are waiting for feedback from your capitals or wish to discuss in regional groups. I remain available for further consultation this afternoon and tomorrow morning so that we can reconvene tomorrow afternoon.

This concludes our business for today. Our next meeting will be tomorrow, Wednesday, 17 February, at 3 p.m.

Before I close the meeting, I recognize the representative of India.

**Mr. Varma (India):** Mr. President, it was not my intention to interrupt what you were saying. I just needed to request you to provide a point of clarification on the way forward.

From what I have understood, you have taken on board a widely expressed sentiment that your proposal requires further consultations in various forms. We are also in a situation where we require instructions from our capitals and, at least speaking for my delegation, we will not be in a position to provide further clarity to what we have provided today in the short time that you have indicated for reconvening our work tomorrow. I would request you to take that into account. Of course, we remain available for the consultations

that you wish to conduct, but our position tomorrow may not be very different from what we have indicated today.

**The President:** Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I have been consulting as well as to the length of time that you require and have come to the conclusion that, to allow more time, perhaps we should meet on Friday at 10 a.m. This meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting was adjourned at 11.20 a.m.*