
Conference on Disarmament

English

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

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 23 February 2016, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Mr. Steffen Kongstad (Norway)

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The President: I call to order the 1376th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, Ms. Soliman, other friends in the secretariat, ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to start this meeting by thanking Minister Peters Emuze of the Permanent Mission of Nigeria for having guided us through the first four weeks of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament. I sincerely appreciate all the efforts undertaken by the presidency of Nigeria, my dear colleague Peters and his team, for trying to find a way forward, including by presenting concrete proposals on a programme of work. The deadlock in the Conference can be attributed to many causes, ranging from the large — the troubled global security environment — to the comparatively small — the rules of procedure of the Conference. Whatever the cause, the Conference once worked, in the days when member States wanted it to work. A question for members is whether it is feasible at this stage to make the Conference work again.

Efforts made so far in 2016 — for example, the proposal put forward by Nigeria and the one just tabled by the United Kingdom — indicate that efforts are still being made to find a way around the impasse. Whether those initiatives are stimulated by a new sense of urgency stemming from heightened international and regional tensions, or from the growing frustration and impatience with the continued impasse, may not really matter. The response to the proposals will indicate whether members really believe that a new sense of purpose in these circumstances can be engendered and take hold in the Conference on Disarmament.

Goodwill and the rebuilding of trust will be needed. This is not something that the President alone can bring about, but the Norwegian presidency — along with our five counterparts in 2016 — stands ready to foster any effort showing promise in the kind of confidence-building that will be needed to underpin serious negotiations on core issues. In my consultations with members, I will be seeking negotiating flexibility and recognition of alternative points of view.

The future of this body, I suspect, ultimately depends on whether proposals are seen by all as offering viable, sustainable means of getting negotiations under way. This will be clearly measured by the progress we make in resuming this body's mission on the basis of an agreed programme of work. I am well aware of the fact that the President is in the hands of the membership, and any success depends on the collective will of this body. During the coming week, I intend to undertake various consultations based on the proposals on the table.

Dear colleagues, you have all received a copy of the letter from Ambassador Matthew Rowland of the United Kingdom addressed to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, transmitting a draft decision for the Conference on Disarmament to establish a formal working group and an associated programme of work for the duration of the 2016 session. The letter and the draft decision were circulated by the secretariat at the request of the delegation of the United Kingdom, and the United Kingdom has requested that they be issued as a Conference document. This means that we currently have two draft proposals for a programme of work before us. The proposal for a programme of work circulated by Nigeria during its presidency and issued as document CD/WP.594, which we discussed last week, and the draft proposal circulated by the delegation of the United Kingdom and issued as document CD/2055.

I would now like to turn to the list of speakers for today. The delegation of the United Kingdom has requested to take the floor. I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom. Ambassador Matthew Rowland, you have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Mr. President, as this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you on your assumption of that role and assure you of my delegation's full support for your efforts.

Mr. President, I said in my remarks at the opening of this year's session that, without losing sight of the priority that the United Kingdom places on the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, the United Kingdom was willing to consider innovative approaches to getting the Conference on Disarmament back to work and that we could and should be more ambitious.

Over the last two months, we have been thinking hard and discussing with others what form that ambition should take — a form that would bring back to this Conference a shared sense of purpose that enabled our predecessors to produce the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and a shared understanding that, collectively, we can achieve a level of security unattainable when acting alone. We believe that the proposal we have submitted and which was circulated in English by the secretariat yesterday has the potential to bring back a shared sense of purpose to this Conference. I have not had the opportunity to consult every delegation on the draft in the last few months, which I regret, but I have consulted a majority of States and not one has indicated that it could not accept the proposal.

This, Mr. President, is a proposal aimed at getting every member State to say "yes" so that we can collectively resume our work, not a proposal aimed at forcing one or a few States to say "no". During my consultations, the most frequently raised question has been the implications for the four core issues. It is not our intention with this proposal to rewrite the Conference's agenda that we have once again agreed this year or to assert that any agenda item is subsidiary to another. A close reading of the draft should reassure those who have lingering doubts in this area. Given the divisions within the community on the priority afforded to the individual items on the Conference's agenda, however, and the paucity of consensus resolutions on these issues at the First Committee, we think that it is important that there is a comprehensive discussion of the disarmament agenda, including the linkages between the issues, with a view to agreeing a consensual way forward.

In essence, our proposal would establish a working group and an associated programme of work to identify, elaborate and make recommendations on effective measures for disarmament. We believe our proposal builds on the informal discussions held during the last two sessions. Those discussions have been worthwhile, but they have been recorded only in Chair's summaries, not in reports agreed by consensus. There has therefore been no concrete output from the Conference that can be fed into the wider debate. We would propose to hold as many sessions as possible of the working group in plenary, and the group would negotiate a report containing recommendations that would need to be agreed by all members of the Conference.

In practice, we propose dividing the time available to the working group into three phases devoted to identification, elaboration and the agreement of recommendations. We do not propose further subdividing the resulting programme of work by agenda items or specific topics. Each participating State will have the opportunity to put forward ideas or proposals as it wishes during the first two phases.

The initial phase would be an opportunity to map proposals from participating States according to the categories identified in the mandate, legal provisions or other arrangements for the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons and legal provisions or other arrangements for the maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. The structure of the second phase would be dependent on how the first phase proceeds. The third phase will be a negotiation of the report and recommendations based on a Chair's draft.

We encourage those States who are not members to participate in the work of the working group; and, within the programme of work we are proposing, we have scheduled

in at least one day in each of the three phases for civil society to sit in the chamber and address the working group and engage in interactive debate. This is a significant increase in civil society engagement compared with prior practice.

Let me conclude by saying that we hope that the willingness of the United Kingdom to chair the discussions is seen as a sign of good faith that we want the working group to be a meaningful process with a meaningful output. I would be happy to respond to any questions that colleagues may wish to raise with me now, and I hope, Mr. President, that you will feel that you can conduct consultations on the basis of the draft with a view to taking action on it before too long.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I see the representative of India wishes to take the floor. You have the floor, Ambassador Varma.

Mr. Varma (India): Mr. President, it is a pleasure to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and we are confident that, with your diplomatic skill and experience, the Conference will be well served during your tenure. You can be assured of the full cooperation of the Indian delegation. We would also like to convey our appreciation to the Nigerian presidency for their efforts as the first President of the 2016 session.

During the plenary on 26 January, India had set out its expectations for the programme of work for this year and had requested the President to take into account relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions which merit attention and follow-up by this Conference. We are confident that, in continuing consultations on our draft programme of work, you would consider the following resolutions: resolution 70/34 on follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament; resolution 70/62 on a convention on prohibition of use of nuclear weapons; resolution 70/39 on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; resolution 70/26 on prevention of an arms race in outer space; and resolution 70/25 on the conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

In our view, the Conference should seek to preserve the gains of past decisions while making progress on agenda items to achieve consensus on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that would allow the commencement of substantive work. In case a programme of work is not possible, then the Conference could consider points contained in paragraph 6 of document CD/2033, the report of the informal working group of last year, in taking forward structured informal discussions on agenda items.

We have taken careful note of the proposal just made by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom. We will give it really serious consideration and we very much welcome the intention to conduct consultations on the various proposals on the table, including the proposal just made by the United Kingdom. I would be very happy to take part in those consultations.

India is not participating in the Open-ended Working Group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/33, which commenced its work in Geneva on 22 February 2016. On this occasion, we have several colleagues and friends of ours present in this chamber who have come to Geneva to attend this conference and we would like to extend a warm welcome to them.

Mr. President, we would like to explain the reasons for the position of India in not attending the Open-ended Working Group. India abstained on General Assembly resolution 70/33 with an explanation of vote. Disarmament is the charter responsibility of the General Assembly. In exercise of this responsibility, the first special session of the General

Assembly on disarmament established the disarmament machinery with the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Nuclear disarmament continues to be on the Conference's agenda. For its part, India has supported the commencement of negotiations in the Conference on a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention and a convention on the prohibition of use of nuclear weapons.

From current indications, the Open-ended Working Group does not include all representative groups of States, in particular States whose interests are especially affected. Those participating are all non-nuclear-weapon States — parties to a particular treaty, some protected by nuclear weapons and many which are not. While we acknowledge the strong interest among these States to continue international engagement on issues that were stalled by the inconclusive Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference of 2015, the substantive limitations of the Open-ended Working Group process are self-evident. As such, we believe that the Open-ended Working Group established outside the Conference on Disarmament with an unclear mandate and with the General Assembly's rules of procedure may not lead to an inclusive process or productive outcomes that would advance prospects for global non-discriminatory disarmament.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Thani Thongphakdi of Thailand for conducting wide consultations, including with India, in the preparatory phase. And though, for reasons just set out, India will not be participating in the Open-ended Working Group, we would like to wish the Chair of the Working Group and all of the participants success in their deliberations.

The President: I thank the representative of India for his statement. The next speaker on my list is Australia. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. McConville (Australia): Mr. President, as this is the first time I am speaking under your presidency, allow me to assure you that you have the total support of the Australian delegation.

I just want to make a brief remark on the proposal that has been submitted by the United Kingdom and issued to all delegations over the past several days. Australia is participating in the Open-ended Working Group, and we see that process as a useful opportunity for us to explore and develop agreement on a way forward to progress nuclear disarmament. We have always maintained that that process would have been much more effective with the involvement of the nuclear-weapon States and also those States possessing nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, their participation is not occurring in the Open-ended Working Group, and we see this alternative proposal from the United Kingdom as a useful means for us to continue that engagement process on a range of issues related to progressing nuclear disarmament. We also understand that this proposal has a framework which would enable it to ensure that the Open-ended Working Group process has suitable resources to enable both the Open-ended Working Group and this proposed programme of work to occur concurrently.

In summary, I would like to reiterate the Australian delegation's support for this proposal and we encourage all delegations to give it serious consideration.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia for his statement. The next speaker on the list is the representative of Japan, Ambassador Sano.

Mr. Sano (Japan): Mr. President, as this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you on your assumption of this important post at the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Japan is committed to moving the Conference's work forward to promote practical effective measures on nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we welcome the efforts of the United Kingdom — and also previously of the United States — which try to revitalize the

Conference's activities. We are especially encouraged by the fact that nuclear-weapon States have come up with these proposals.

Regarding the draft decision presented by the United Kingdom, we are examining it carefully and are curious about the views of other member States, but basically we are considering this draft decision in a positive manner.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan for his statement. The next speaker on the list is the representative of Sweden. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Thunborg (Sweden): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It is, of course, a particular pleasure for my delegation to see Norway in the Chair, and I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support.

With regard to the proposal of the United Kingdom, we believe that it is a very interesting proposal which we can support. Nuclear disarmament is an extremely important issue to my Government. There are so many issues to be discussed on the nuclear disarmament agenda and we are supportive of nuclear disarmament being discussed in as many complementary forums as possible, such as the Open-ended Working Group, the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations General Assembly, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and so on.

What I would like to underline is that, at the same time, the Open-ended Working Group is an inclusive forum open to all countries, including all nuclear-armed States, and the Group has a very broad mandate and is a forum in which all nuclear disarmament issues that States would like to discuss also can be discussed. We do hope that countries that are currently not participating in the Open-ended Working Group will reconsider their participation for the May session and, at the same time, that we get important work going in the Conference on Disarmament. You have our full support.

The President: I thank the representative of Sweden for her statement. The next speaker is Cuba. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Pérez Álvarez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba would like to begin, Mr. Ambassador, by congratulating you on your assumption of the very important responsibility of presiding over the Conference on Disarmament; your successors this session will likewise have crucial tasks to undertake.

The Cuban delegation has listened to the delegation of the United Kingdom and has received its proposal, along with that of Nigeria, as circulated by the secretariat of the Conference. Our delegation will consider the proposal carefully but is not in a position to express an opinion at this point. We think that it will be vital to ensure transparency and inclusiveness — concepts that are so often mentioned here — with regard to the Open-ended Working Group. It is also important that the Conference take into account the views of its full membership. As we have not seen this proposal before or been consulted bilaterally, we feel it is essential that all members of the Conference be included in any consultations that you conduct.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba for her statement. The next speaker on the list is Italy. You have the floor, Ambassador Mati.

Mr. Mati (Italy): Mr. President, let me join the previous speakers in congratulating you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. Let me also seize this opportunity to thank the outgoing Nigerian presidency for its efforts to reach agreement on a programme of work that would be acceptable to all Conference member States.

Mr. President, as I had the occasion to state at the opening of this year's session, for Italy the Conference on Disarmament remains a cornerstone of the multilateral disarmament machinery. Preserving its primary role in promoting substantive negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation and overcoming its current deadlock, therefore, remain paramount. We appreciate any efforts aimed at encouraging discussion with a view to finding common ground on how to overcome the current situation.

In this vein, we welcomed the proposal for a programme of work submitted by the United States and, now, in the same vein, we also welcome the latest draft decision on a programme of work submitted by the United Kingdom. We believe that the United Kingdom proposal embodies an innovative approach by providing a more flexible structure in which every Conference member can present its ideas and input. We particularly welcome the increased involvement of civil society in the work of the Conference.

From the point of view of substance, we share the emphasis placed by the United Kingdom proposal on nuclear disarmament, which is fully in line with our priorities. As we have consistently stated, Italy is ready to engage actively on all the Conference's agenda items; nonetheless, the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material treaty remains our primary focus as the next logical step on the path towards nuclear disarmament.

Finally, I share the view that the United Kingdom proposal would usefully complement the work currently ongoing at the Open-ended Working Group, which started its substantive session yesterday. Taken together, these processes will allow us to have a comprehensive view, including that of the nuclear-weapon States, of all relevant issues and to have sufficient time to address them.

The President: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement. The next speaker is the representative of Egypt. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Atta (Egypt): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on the assumption of your role, and I assure you of the full support of Egypt. Our thanks and appreciation are also extended to Ambassador Rowland for submitting a draft proposal on a programme of work which is currently under consideration by my capital.

Initially speaking, we perceive no major difference between the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group, which started its substantive work yesterday according to United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/33, and the kind of mandate provided in the draft proposal of the United Kingdom. While we are encouraged by the plethora of proposals submitted by Conference member States, we believe that the work of the Open-ended Working Group could positively contribute to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, whose role and functions were reaffirmed in Assembly resolution 70/33. This is something we were working to make very clear in our statement yesterday in the Open-ended Working Group.

The President: I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement. The next speaker is Mexico. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by assuring you of my delegation's full support in the discharge of your duties.

As regards the proposals on a programme of work submitted at the current session of the Conference on Disarmament, my delegation has already stated its position on the proposal tabled by Nigeria. We take this opportunity to welcome the new proposal submitted by the United Kingdom. We are giving due consideration to the proposal and will suggest amendments during the consultations.

The President: I thank the representative of Mexico for her statement. The next speaker is Poland. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Broilo (Poland): Mr. President, first of all I would like to cordially congratulate you on the assumption of your new duties.

Since we are moving to the second phase of the Conference on Disarmament, we would like this phase to be not only the second but also the decisive one, and Poland will be supportive to this end. In this context, we perceive the proposal of the United Kingdom as a very promising one and we hope that we will all avail ourselves of this opportunity to make real progress.

The President: I thank the representative of Poland for his statement. The next speaker is Ecuador. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Avilés (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, the delegation of Ecuador congratulates you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wishes you every success in the performance of your duties. My delegation assures you of its full cooperation and support in the pursuit of our shared goal of reaching agreement on a programme of work that will enable the Conference to fulfil its mandate to negotiate international instruments on disarmament. Ecuador also wishes to thank the outgoing President of the Conference, the representative of Nigeria, for his valuable efforts throughout his presidency and for the inclusive and transparent manner in which he conducted consultations and his work.

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which dealt precisely with the topic of nuclear disarmament. It also marks the twentieth anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which has yet to enter into force and is now more urgently needed than ever. Sadly, this anniversary is also a reminder that the Conference on Disarmament is still at an impasse, as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was, in fact, the last international instrument negotiated at the Conference.

This year marks as well the forty-ninth anniversary of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), which established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area of the world, and of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), which monitors the implementation of the Treaty throughout the region. This commitment to pacifism was strengthened when the area was officially proclaimed a zone of peace on 29 January 2014 at the second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. The Treaty of Tlatelolco was the first legally binding instrument to prohibit the testing, use, manufacture, production, acquisition, receipt, storage, installation, deployment or possession of nuclear weapons.

When the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was negotiated just over a year later, it benefited from the vital backing provided by the Treaty of Tlatelolco and a vast nuclear-weapon-free region. There are, regrettably, around 16,000 nuclear weapons in existence, of which an estimated 2,000 are currently on alert. This situation has given rise to concerns worldwide about the terrible humanitarian impact of a nuclear explosion, as discussed at the international conferences held in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna. The existence of these weapons poses a grave threat to the very survival of humankind and it is therefore all the more urgent that we adopt effective legal measures to rid the world of nuclear weapons once and for all.

Until we achieve our objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world, the international community should take, as a matter of urgency and in parallel, the following steps to prepare the way for negotiating a legally binding international instrument that prohibits and provides for the elimination of nuclear weapons in a transparent, irreversible and verifiable manner within a multilaterally agreed time frame: the effective cessation of nuclear testing of any kind, including subcritical tests and those carried out using supercomputers; the

prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by way of the signing or ratification of that Treaty by all annex II States, bearing in mind that ratification implies the immediate cancellation of any and all plans to modernize or perfect nuclear weapons; universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and strict compliance with it, including the obligations set forth in its article VI; the establishment of new zones free of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction, particularly in the Middle East and on the Korean Peninsula, as well as in other regions in the world; the proclamation of zones of peace in other regions of the world; the adoption of a treaty on negative security assurances; the elimination of the role of nuclear weapons in security policies and doctrines and in military strategies; the adoption of a treaty on the prevention and prohibition of an arms race in outer space; and the adoption of a treaty banning fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as well as the elimination of existing stocks. In addition, better education and information need to be provided on the imminent threat that nuclear weapons pose to global peace and security and to the survival of humankind.

The Ecuadorian delegation would like to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for its proposal on a programme of work: we see it as a creative solution and intend to give it our full attention and consideration. At the same time, Ecuador encourages you, Mr. President, to continue the process of consulting all States and regional groups and to step up your valuable efforts towards the adoption of a programme of work that will finally enable the Conference to resume its work and fulfil its negotiating mandate. Ecuador will support the consensus that is reached on this matter.

The President: I thank the representative of Ecuador for his statement. The next speaker on the list is the Netherlands. You have the floor, Ambassador Van der Kwast.

Mr. Van der Kwast (Netherlands): Mr. President, first of all let me welcome you in the Chair. We knew Norway for quite some time was critical and we think it is very good to have a critical person in the Chair. We know that you are very able in leading us and we really hope that we will get a refreshing wind from the North. We also want to thank Nigeria — and now I come to the warm wind from the South — there was a lot of hard work put into consultations and other things, and we think indeed that that hard work brought us forward. So, many thanks to the Nigerian delegation for being very active.

We are grateful for the proposal just presented. We will see how that will further develop. In any case, this delegation will support the proposal in principle, and we also welcome the preparedness of the United Kingdom to chair the working group. Many remarks have been made concerning the distinction between the Open-ended Working Group, which started yesterday, and the Conference on Disarmament. There are some quite remarkable approaches from some delegations who think they are the same, a pair. We should be very clear: there is a very clear distinction in that the Conference on Disarmament was established quite some time ago and has negotiated fundamental treaties, like the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and still has the important task of moving forward negotiations on disarmament. So, I would very much agree with what my Italian colleague said in that the Conference on Disarmament remains, at least for this delegation, the cornerstone of the disarmament machinery. That having been said, however, we absolutely agree with all those who say that there has been too little progress. There, maybe the pressure of the Open-ended Working Group will help, particularly for the five permanent members of the Security Council, who have chosen not to be part of the Open-ended Working Group, which is fair enough. But we think that puts a very special responsibility on them to come forward in this room with proposals and to be active and to show that, indeed, the case of disarmament is a serious case and that they are prepared to negotiate on that.

With regard to the Open-ended Working Group, the Netherlands abstained on resolution 70/33, which established this Open-ended Working Group. The main reasons for our abstention were unresolved differences on the mandate and the rules of procedure. We think the Open-ended Working Group would have profited from the participation of those States possessing nuclear weapons. In our view, their participation would have been an important added value compared to the Open-ended Working Group process in 2013. Although we abstained on the resolution, we still consider it important to participate actively in the Open-ended Working Group and to see what can bring us closer to “global zero”.

Mr. President, I would like to leave it there. We are very open to further consultations. We are very open to further discussions, and we hope that the five permanent Security Council members will also take their responsibility in this room because we think they are key to the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement. The next speaker is Belgium. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Dhaene (Belgium): Mr. President, first of all allow me to join others in congratulating you on your assumption of the Conference on Disarmament presidency. I wish you every success in this important endeavour, and you can count on the full support of my delegation. My delegation also wishes to warmly thank the previous Nigerian presidency for its hard work and efforts.

Mr. President, the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament is a priority for my country, and we therefore actively support all efforts aimed at overcoming the present stalemate in the Conference, in particular the failure to come to an agreement on a programme of work. Belgium believes that the Conference should start its work immediately on the basis of a substantive and balanced programme of work, ideally with a commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

My country is, however, ready to consider favourably other proposals on the table. Today, a new proposal has been introduced by one of the permanent members of the Security Council — the United Kingdom — that my country fully welcomes. It is concrete and realistic. The mandate that is being proposed is balanced, with a discussion on nuclear disarmament but not only through legal measures. The working methods are those of the Conference on Disarmament; participation of civil society is also foreseen. My country does not view this proposal as being in competition with the Open-ended Working Group and it does not preclude our participation in the Open-ended Working Group. As indicated by other delegations, the proposal of the United Kingdom would have the advantage of including the nuclear-weapon States in the discussion.

In conclusion, Mr. President, my country is ready to support the United Kingdom proposal.

The President: I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement. The next speaker is Spain. You have the floor, Ambassador.

Mr. Herráiz España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, it goes without saying that my delegation joins in the congratulations extended to you on your new responsibilities and wishes you the best of luck in this complex task. We wish also to thank the Nigerian presidency for the constructive approach it adopted and for its proposal on a programme of work, which constituted a constructive alternative as well.

During this session we have seen a number of constructive proposals tabled, including the one that was put forward by the delegation of the United States and which may be considered in future. The Conference on Disarmament thus has before it a wealth of

possibilities and alternatives that have the potential to be adjusted and enhanced through the kind of flexible, constructive approach that should be a hallmark of this body.

We now have yet a further option. We feel that this option is both feasible and appropriate given what the Conference is called upon to do, that is, embark on negotiations. Clearly, we cannot content ourselves with proposals that merely reproduce discussions or debates from years gone by. We need to ensure that these discussions and debates serve as a foundation for future negotiations, and I believe that the United Kingdom proposal was made in that spirit. It is not a proposal that presupposes it will fail and that debate will then continue. I see it as an attempt to identify, elaborate and make recommendations with a view to working towards what we are able to achieve. And this we can do here in the Conference — with the participation of the nuclear-weapon States and of States possessing nuclear weapons. At the same time, the work being done by the Open-ended Working Group will, we hope, contribute constructively to building consensus and thus allow us to move closer to our objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. Indeed, Spain is participating in the Working Group in the hope that consensus-based conclusions will be reached.

Here in the Conference on Disarmament, however, we benefit from the presence of the nuclear-weapon States and of States possessing nuclear weapons. As a result, the debate will undoubtedly be richer, more constructive and more effective, because concrete, effective measures for disarmament — as we have noted time and again — are necessary. Effectiveness will be attained more easily with the participation of all these States, and that is the option we now have on the table. There is, I think, room for improvement and adjustments can be made, but we have to embrace it as what we have on the table. The alternative is that we allow the deadlock to continue and we go on doing nothing: that is not an option.

Our approach to the programme of work should not be one of complacency and self-satisfaction but rather one of critical rigour, aware that we have before us a very complex task in which we must move forward taking into account humanitarian aspects, security and strategic stability. We do not have many options, but if we take a critical approach — and I think, Mr. President, that remarks have already been made here about a constructively critical and rigorous approach of the kind we need — we can achieve that objective together.

The President: I thank the representative of Spain for his statement. The next speaker on the list is Bulgaria. You have the floor, Ambassador.

Mr. Piperkov (Bulgaria): Mr. President, let me congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of the full support of our delegation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Nigeria, as the first President of this year's session, for its genuine efforts to set the work of the Conference on the right track.

I would like to express our preliminary views on the proposal by the United Kingdom for a programme of work, introduced just now by the United Kingdom delegation.

Bulgaria has always sought to play a constructive role in this body and is ready to support every reasonable initiative aimed at overcoming the long-standing deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament. Like all other Conference members, we are very concerned that we have not been able to succeed in agreeing on a programme of work, as the Conference continues to fail to fulfil its negotiating mandate for already two decades.

With this in mind, I would like to say that we see significant merit in the United Kingdom proposal. It is a well-balanced compromise that reflects efforts from previous years to narrow down the differences on a programme of work. We hope very much that

this proposal will have the capacity to command consensus among the member States and will provide a good basis for the Conference to resume its substantive work.

The President: I thank the representative of Bulgaria for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? Finland, you have the floor.

Ms. Kairamo (Finland): Allow me to start, Mr. President, by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You may trust in the full support and cooperation of my delegation throughout your tenure. I would also like to thank the outgoing Nigerian presidency for their efforts to get a programme of work to this Conference.

I will be very brief. We, too, wish to express our support for the proposal put forward by the United Kingdom today, but I would also like to stress that we were already prepared to support the proposal presented earlier by the United States, and — not surprisingly so — we would have been able also to work on the basis of the Nigerian proposal. In summary, we are extremely willing to support any efforts put forward at this Conference that would take us forward and allow us to start negotiations.

The President: I thank the representative of Finland for her statement. I now have the Russian Federation. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on behalf of the Russian delegation on your assumption of the presidency and to wish you every success in your endeavours. You may count on constructive cooperation and support from us.

I am pleased to see here the familiar faces of those who have had occasion to participate in various disarmament forums. I hope that their participation here in the Conference on Disarmament will be as productive as in the Open-ended Working Group. I am confident that, with their continued firm support, we will be able to make significant progress towards reaching a compromise.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Nigerian presidency for its contribution to the joint effort to arrive at a compromise on the draft programme of work. I would like to point out that the text proposed by the Nigerian presidency is being given serious consideration in Moscow.

With regard to the proposal of the United Kingdom, we have taken it into account and will be forwarding it to Moscow for further review. I wish to assure those present, in particular the delegation of the United Kingdom, that the proposal will receive very careful attention.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once more that the Russian delegation is committed to constructive cooperation with all interested delegations.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement. I now recognize Brazil. You have the floor, Ambassador.

Mr. Motta Pinto Coelho (Brazil): Mr. President, I would first like to congratulate you as you take up the functions of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and I assure you of this delegation's full support in your endeavours.

Mr. President, the Open-ended Working Group embarked on its work yesterday and I think that, with that, it has established a new dynamic of power in the framework of trying to negotiate nuclear disarmament. It has started its work very well in the sense that it has provided us here in the Conference on Disarmament with important input and we have seen a number of new initiatives in the Conference trying to break the paralysis that has marked this body for so long. This delegation has recognized as positive the United States initiative,

providing proposals for moving the Conference back to work, and we would like to reiterate our thanks to the Nigerian delegation and the Nigerian President for his efforts in trying to provide a very interesting proposal for a programme of work, which we thought would have provided for a comprehensive and balanced programme of work comprising all core issues.

We have seen today the introduction of the proposal by the United Kingdom, which we also consider very interesting in that it, too, presents a contribution to move the Conference back to work. It is welcome and we will certainly consider it positively. There are, however, some important elements that we would like to review in this proposal, especially the fact that it still lacks a clear mandate on the negotiating aspect. In the consultations that will ensue, perhaps there will be some ground for consideration of that aspect.

Overall, what I would like to emphasize at this point is that we have, as a reality, the Open-ended Working Group, which is working and working positively. We are participating, and we regret that not all the members of this Conference are participating in the Open-ended Working Group. But as many other delegations here have indicated, we have hope that this will eventually happen in the future, so that we can work with the main perspective of convergence between the work of the Open-ended Working Group and the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, the current global governance system led by the United Nations has the legitimacy — and that is an important thing — the legitimacy and effectiveness to negotiate and support the implementation of legal measures, which is what we are pursuing here. The General Assembly, in particular, is the world's most representative forum and, as mandated by Article 11 of the Charter of the United Nations, it has the prerogative to consider disarmament issues. Other United Nations or United Nations-related institutions, such as those comprising the disarmament machinery, for example, the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament, and the International Atomic Energy Agency, can also play important roles in this process. So, we are legitimately working within the Conference on Disarmament and within the Open-ended Working Group towards the same goal, which is a point that we should strive to emphasize as we consider and respond as positively to the United Kingdom proposal as to the other ones.

The President: I thank the representative of Brazil for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

I would now like to ask the secretariat to share with us some organizational information.

Mr. Kalbusch (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Mr. President, we have issued several documents over the past few weeks, including notes and letters from delegations. They can all be found in delegates' mailboxes, and we would be grateful if delegates could check their mailboxes to ensure that they have received all documents, the latest being document CD/2055, which should have been received today.

We continue to have e-mail addresses from some delegations that are not operational: either the mailboxes are full or there are mistakes. Delegates should kindly check document CD/INF.71 to see if the information provided therein is correct. If there is anything incorrect, please contact the secretariat and let us know so that we can update our mailing lists.

The President: This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will start our so-called high-level segment, which will be held on Monday, 29 February, at 11 a.m.

The informal consultations among the six Presidents of the 2016 session and the informal consultation with the coordinators of the regional groups will take place on the same day at 10 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. respectively. There are currently 17 speakers on the list of speakers for the high-level segment on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday next week.

Any questions on the technicalities or formalities of the high-level segment can be addressed to the secretariat.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.