

Conference on Disarmament

English

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


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President: Mr. Steffen Kongstad (Norway)

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The President: I call to order the 1379th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In order to welcome our first speaker at this morning's high-level segment, I will now suspend this meeting.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our first distinguished guest of today, Her Excellency Ms. Lenita Toivakka, Minister of Foreign Trade and Development of Finland. I thank you very much, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament today. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Toivakka (Finland): Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I am truly delighted to be able to address the Conference on Disarmament today. The past year has reminded us that we live in an ever more interdependent world. We share the responsibility to respond to old and new security challenges. Inaction is not an option. Today, the situation is far from ideal in many parts of the world. Millions of young people are unemployed and lack future perspectives. The key word is "inclusiveness". I firmly believe that equal participation of both men and women is needed to reach sustainable society. Integrating a gender dimension also in the domain of "hard security" is very important, as gender equality has a decisive role to play in making our world more secure for everyone, men and women alike.

In the current security context, the need to uphold and strengthen the rule of law in international affairs is more important than ever. Arms control treaties are especially important as they provide stability and predictability, and build confidence and lead us to disarmament. Finland underlines the importance of respecting international commitments as well as addressing arms control and proliferation challenges in a concrete manner. Finland is active in many arms control-related initiatives that complement the normative framework. Despite increased tensions in many parts of the world, including ours, we have also seen positive developments in the field of arms control and disarmament.

The Arms Trade Treaty is a significant achievement for the international community. It contributes to stability and security, and it provides a more equal and level playing field for companies, as more countries apply similar export control policies and principles. It also provides us with a new tool to address unregulated and illicit trade in conventional arms. Now we need to work towards universalization of the Treaty and ensure its effective implementation. It is also vital to continue dialogue with civil society and industry in achieving more responsible international trade of defence material.

Recently we have seen some significant progress in non-proliferation efforts. Finland welcomes the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme. The process that led to this achievement demonstrates that, when there is a political will, the international community is able to overcome differences and reach a diplomatic outcome. Full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is crucial to achieve international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme.

The international mission to remove and destruct the declared chemical weapons programme of Syria was unprecedented. Finland was strongly involved in this international effort. We however remain deeply concerned about the use of chlorine as a weapon as well as the alleged use of mustard gas. Any use of sulphur mustard or other chemical warfare agent in a conflict is against the Chemical Weapons Convention and customary humanitarian law. Our work will not be finished until the Syrian chemical weapons programme is completely and irreversibly eliminated.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is an important instrument of multilateral disarmament and the non-proliferation regime. The Convention has done its part in preventing the use of biological weapons. But, at the same time, technology advances, and new non-State parties are emerging. We need to make sure that the Convention and its implementation will live up to expectations also in the future. This

year's review conference is a timely occasion to address these challenges. Let us use this opportunity wisely.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is working effectively. With persistent hard work and significant efforts, the international community is moving step by step towards a world free of anti-personnel mines. I am pleased to inform you that Finland has been able to take a step along this road. We have completed the destruction of our anti-personnel landmine stockpiles as of August last year. We will also remain active in the field of humanitarian mine action.

Last year did not pass without challenges. The failure to reach a consensus outcome in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference was, of course, disappointing. Despite this setback, the NPT remains the best way forward and the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime. The commitments under all three pillars of the NPT remain valid: those related to disarmament are more urgent than ever and we should think that all States will abide by these commitments in years to come.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was opened for signature 20 years ago. While we cannot be satisfied as long as the Treaty is not in force, we should commend the progress made over the years. We have a near universal understanding that the time of nuclear test explosions is over, and we have a comprehensive verification regime. Finland is proud to host one of the primary stations of the International Monitoring System. This system has proved to be very useful in practice, not only by detecting nuclear tests but also in disaster alerts.

The timeliness of the Treaty was highlighted by the recent nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Finland condemns in the strongest possible terms the nuclear test and the following launch using ballistic missile technology. They represent serious violations of the international obligations of North Korea, as set out in various United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Finland is proud to be one of the "Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty". We are fully committed to promoting the entry into force of the Treaty. I urge all States that have not yet ratified the Treaty: let us close the door on nuclear testing completely.

Mr. President, let me now turn to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. With pressing urgency, it is our responsibility to search every avenue that could lead to substantive work in the Conference. Our priority is a balanced and comprehensive programme of work with a negotiation mandate on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Finland welcomes the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on this topic. We trust that its elements can be utilized in the work of the Conference. We warmly welcome the efforts to end the production of fissile material for nuclear-weapon purposes.

It is important to review and update the working methods of the Conference. Expansion of the Conference's membership would add to its work. Recognition of the contribution of civil society and academia is also vital. Finland stands ready to support the President in revitalizing the work of the Conference. We encourage other partners to do the same. Current proposals to initiate work at the Conference are all considered positively by Finland.

The Open-ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament started its work in February. Finland has participated in this work, as we welcome all efforts that contribute to the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. Working towards a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is a responsibility of every State. We also find it important to address the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons as that highlights the grave consequences of any use of nuclear weapons.

I am afraid there is no fast track to nuclear disarmament. What is important is to see further progress and concrete steps, including further restrictions and reductions in warheads and in their delivery systems. For this, we need the involvement of those States that possess nuclear weapons. The continued implementation of the New START Treaty is a positive example; we encourage going even further. Any process will also need to be an

inclusive one, bringing together nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. We need practical mechanisms; we need to try to build bridges. That is easier said than done, but it is not a reason to give up. I call on the nuclear-weapon States to continue cooperation, build and rebuild confidence, and negotiate deeper cuts in their nuclear arsenals — be they deployed or non-deployed, strategic or tactical nuclear weapons.

I look forward to continue working together with you all to achieve these goals.

The President: I thank Her Excellency Ms. Toivakka for her statement. The meeting is now suspended.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. I would now like to welcome our guest, His Excellency Mr. Tore Hattrem, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway. I thank you very much for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Hattrem (Norway): Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament used to be a key multilateral body. Its past successes include the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. However, for nearly 20 years the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to fulfil its mandate. I do not want to delve into the reasons for this unfortunate state of affairs. What is clear is that we need well-functioning arenas that can bring the disarmament agenda forward, and that is why it is vital that we overcome the current deadlock in the Conference.

While there is broad agreement on the overall objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons, there are still different positions on the question of how to get there. There is no fast track, but Norway shares the sense of impatience felt by many.

Any nuclear detonation would have such severe humanitarian consequences that no country would be able to provide an adequate relief response and nor could the international community. The removal and destruction of nuclear weapons is clearly the best way to prevent any such catastrophe.

At the same time, we must be realistic. We will never genuinely achieve the vision of a world without nuclear weapons unless we engage the nuclear-weapon States in a constructive manner. They are the ones who will actually have to destroy their nuclear arsenals. Norway urges the United States and the Russian Federation to engage in a new round of nuclear reduction talks focusing on all categories of nuclear weapons. Subsequently, other nuclear-weapon States will have to be brought into the negotiations. We need new and far more profound cuts in the stocks of nuclear arms. These cuts must be both irreversible and verifiable. Non-nuclear-weapon States can contribute to the development of credible verification schemes by participating in partnerships. Norway, thus, attaches great importance to the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. The most recent plenary of the International Partnership was held in Oslo in November last year.

Non-nuclear-weapon States can also contribute to consolidating and further strengthening the non-proliferation regime. Bilateral and trilateral arms reductions must be accompanied by multilateral efforts. It is deeply disappointing that we are to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without this crucial instrument having entered into force.

The recent and unacceptable nuclear testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a stark reminder that we need a full legal ban on nuclear testing. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with its international obligations.

The negotiation and conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty would help to prevent the development of new weapons and to consolidate the non-proliferation regime. It would send a forceful message about the reduced role of nuclear weapons in future security policies.

At the same time, we cannot achieve a world without nuclear weapons unless we address the issue of stockpiles. Securing all nuclear material, including civilian nuclear

material, is also essential for nuclear security. We must never allow sensitive nuclear material to fall into the hands of terrorist groups.

Norway considers the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to be the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. For this reason, Norway deeply regrets the fact that the 2015 Review Conference failed to agree on a substantive outcome document. Having said this, let me stress that the legally binding obligations of the Treaty still stand. The outcome documents of 1995, 2000 and 2010 must continue to guide our efforts in the time ahead.

Besides reductions of existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons, we must continue to explore ways to reduce the importance attributed to these weapons in security policies. Negative security assurances are one way of reducing the geographical reach of nuclear arms. Regional nuclear-weapon-free zones would be another. We must make progress on establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones for the Middle East and the Korean Peninsula. We deplore the recent nuclear testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, there have been encouraging developments elsewhere. We welcome the agreement between Iran and the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany. The Iran deal shows that diplomacy can work. This should inspire us as we continue our efforts to advance the nuclear disarmament agenda.

In the Conference on Disarmament and in the Open-ended Working Group, we should consider the various possible routes to achieving and maintaining a nuclear-weapon-free world. We should do so in a non-confrontational manner and seek to identify common ground. We must work to build confidence and make progress. Through a combination of vision, persistence, realism and respect, we may together be able to achieve a world in which the nuclear weapon threat is finally consigned to history.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Hattrem for his statement. The plenary meeting is now suspended.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. I would now like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation to the Conference on Disarmament. Thank you very much, Excellency, for addressing the Conference. You have the floor.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I thank you for inviting me to speak here at this meeting. The Russian Federation has always attached great importance to participating in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that this is a unique platform that provides an opportunity for dialogue and negotiations on a broad spectrum of current issues pertaining to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. In this forum, which works by consensus, each State party trusts that its voice will be heard and its national security interests duly taken into account. The Conference has a successful track record of a broad array of basic international agreements on which global security largely depends. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention are among its most recent major achievements. However, both agreements date back to the last decade of the last century. Unfortunately, since then, it has not been possible to resume the negotiating process owing to serious differences well known to us all over the Conference's programme of work.

We fully share our partners' disappointment and concern that the stalemate has lasted so long and believe that there is a need to remedy the situation as quickly as possible. However, we consider that the deadlock will not be broken by shifting negotiations to other forums, much less by renouncing efforts to reach a consensus, but rather by assiduously and creatively seeking ways to balance interests. Over the past two decades, various options to overcome the deadlock have been explored, but not one of them, to date, has worked. In our view, the lack of a positive outcome may be explained as much by the objective differences in States' priorities as by the difficulties in finding a compromise within the rather rigid bounds of the traditional agenda of the Conference. It seems to us all that we have already put to the test every conceivable combination of items on the agenda but have nevertheless

failed to arrive at a consensus. With this in mind, we hope that everyone feels the need for a fresh and unconventional approach.

We propose that consideration should be given to starting negotiations on a new topic that might play a unifying role but that has not yet been featured in the discussions of the draft programme of work of the Conference. Such a topic, in our view, might be an issue that stands at the crossroads of disarmament, non-proliferation and counter-terrorism. This is of particular relevance today given the current state of affairs.

The threat of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors is widely recognized, and a great deal has been done to meet it. The adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) was a major step forward and, in 2005, the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism was negotiated on the initiative of the Russian Federation. However, there are still serious gaps relating in particular to the use of chemicals for terrorist purposes. This is very much a live issue today in the light of the steady rise in the use by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq not only of toxic industrial chemicals but also of actual chemical warfare agents. There is a growing risk of similar crimes in Libya and Yemen as well. Such activities by non-State actors in the Middle East and North Africa are becoming increasingly widespread and systematic and transcend borders, threatening to spill over far beyond the region. There are reports of terrorist groups gaining access to scientific and technical documents for the production of chemical weapons, of chemical plants and equipment being taken over and of foreign specialists being called in to develop chemical warfare agents. That this situation is extremely urgent is attested by the incidents that occurred in August and September 2015 in the Syrian town of Marea, where, as has been established by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact-Finding Mission, Islamic State militants used artillery shells filled with sulphur mustard, a fully-fledged chemical warfare agent. This leaves no room for doubt that chemical terrorism no longer constitutes an abstract threat: it is a harsh reality of our time that can and must be confronted by revitalizing serious work in international forums.

At the same time, we believe that it is important to bear in mind that the Chemical Weapons Convention is a far cry from fully meeting the challenge of combating chemical terrorism. We see little merit in the argument that the existing rules of customary international law are sufficient. These rules do not resolve the problem of prohibiting the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors any more than they resolve that of classifying such acts as international crimes. Eliminating such shortcomings by drafting amendments to the Convention is rather problematic, as amending it would entail an overly complicated, long and unwieldy procedure. A more realistic, viable and promising means of meeting the challenge now facing us is to draft a separate convention to combat acts of chemical terrorism.

It is clear that there are a number of international forums in which that could be undertaken. However, we propose that it be done precisely here, in the Conference on Disarmament, which has already made an invaluable contribution to reducing the chemical threat through the successful negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This would thereby serve two objectives: combating chemical terrorism, on the one hand, and breaking the deadlock in the work of this Geneva disarmament forum, on the other. If the Conference were to begin practical work on such a convention, there would certainly be a need for close cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. It would also be necessary to ensure that all States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention that are not members of the Conference were able to contribute to the drafting of the new agreement. This might be accomplished by granting States that so wished observer status at the Conference, as permitted under the rules of procedure.

We believe that negotiations on a new convention, if this idea is supported, should be combined with the substantive work on the four core issues of the Conference's agenda, namely nuclear disarmament, prevention of an arms race in outer space, negative security assurances and a fissile material cut-off treaty. Working bodies with discussion mandates could be established for each of these issues. The relevant Russian proposals would be prepared and submitted to the Norwegian presidency.

I would like to stress the following important point. It goes without saying that progress on the joint initiative of the Russian Federation and China on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space is a Russian priority. We ourselves have actually already decided to move towards negotiations on this issue. However, in order to promote consensus on our proposed new comprehensive framework for further work in the Conference, we would be prepared, within that framework, to limit ourselves at this stage to a discussion mandate on outer space.

We trust that our partners will show similar flexibility regarding their priorities in order to overcome the stalemate in the Conference.

We call on all participants in the Conference on Disarmament to give careful consideration to our proposal. We believe that this can be made a reality only if the States represented here work together and enter into constructive dialogue, which we stand ready to do and call on all to do likewise. We hope that such a discussion can help break the vicious circle and allow us to get down to the in-depth work, including the process of negotiation, for which this very forum was established.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Lavrov for his statement to the Conference. I will now suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. I would now like to welcome our distinguished guest, His Excellency Mr. Yannis Amanatidis, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece. I wish to thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Amanatidis (Greece): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you every success.

It is indeed an honour for me to be addressing the Conference on Disarmament, the single permanent negotiating forum for disarmament, which has during its tenure produced numerous important multilateral treaties that guided the global community through détente to the post-cold war environment. In today's increasingly turbulent world, the Conference must once again rise to its obligations to the international community. It is called upon to find a way to resolve the long-standing deadlock by restarting negotiations on pivotal issues such as the fissile material cut-off treaty — which is, after all, the next logical step towards nuclear disarmament — and, at the same time, to address other pressing issues in the field of disarmament.

Today, the need to establish common ground for the revival of deliberations in the Conference on Disarmament is more pressing than ever. Deliberations in the First Committee at the seventieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, spearheaded by the resolutions on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, brought to the fore the increasing pressure that the Conference faces as well as the looming danger. The long-standing quagmire of this negotiating body must come to an end, or the Conference runs the risk of falling into abeyance and becoming irrelevant, even though it started as the inspiration of so many disarmament initiatives. Important developments in the field of disarmament have found fertile ground outside of this forum, thus widening the gap between the Conference and the rest of the disarmament machinery. More specifically, the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty after eight years of copious negotiations was indeed a great achievement. My country, Greece, ratified the Arms Trade Treaty by law in February 2016.

While deliberations in disarmament forums continue, in the Conference on Disarmament progress has been slow. In our view, it is high time to leave behind the current inertia in this important negotiating forum and take advantage of important initiatives regularly tabled in the First Committee. As in previous years, Greece, along with the rest of the European Union member States, supported resolution 70/39 on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We remain steadfast in the belief that the way forward towards complete and

verifiable nuclear disarmament is through a step-by-step approach. An appropriate first step would be a fissile material treaty.

Mr. President, allow me now to turn to an issue to which Greece attaches great importance, given that we are the longest standing observer at the Conference on Disarmament, since 1982. I am referring to the question of enlargement, which is foreseen in rule 2 of the Conference's rules of procedure, according to which the membership of the Conference will be reviewed at regular intervals. We are of the view that there is no reason or moral justification to exclude United Nations Member States from disarmament discussions, all the more so because of the universal nature of the United Nations. In a time when global challenges require collective solutions through global partnerships, it is indeed an anachronism to restrict participation in negotiations on disarmament issues to only 65 countries. It is equally outdated to hold enlargement hostage to bilateral issues which have absolutely no relevance to the subject matter of the Conference on Disarmament.

In conclusion, given the multiple challenges which the world is facing today in the field of global security, we believe that the Conference cannot afford to remain in constant deadlock and should finally begin substantive work through the adoption of a programme of work. Recent initiatives in the First Committee at the seventieth session of the General Assembly and current deliberations at the Open-ended Working Group in Geneva have set the stage for a constructive outlook.

Greece stands ready, as a responsible member of the international community, which participates in all of the principal instruments in the field of disarmament, to contribute its share, commensurate with its responsibilities, to bringing the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament to an end.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Amanatidis for his statement to the Conference. I will now suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. I would now like to welcome our distinguished guest, Mr. Pedro Núñez Mosquera, Director General of the Division on Multilateral Affairs and International Law at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba. Thank you very much, Sir, for addressing the Conference. You have the floor.

Mr. Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, dear colleagues, the world we live in today is characterized by serious threats to international peace and security, bloody wars and frequent terrorist acts. Exorbitant resources are spent on weapons, and yet it is claimed that not enough are available to fight hunger, poverty and disease and not even the modest Millennium Development Goals could be achieved. The 2030 Agenda provides a new opportunity to settle outstanding debts by responding to the aspirations of progress and development for all humankind and not just for a few. Despite the demands voiced by a majority, more than half a century after the destruction and suffering caused by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the survival of humanity continues to be threatened by the existence of thousands of nuclear weapons, many of which are ready to be used immediately. Cuba will continue to work tirelessly to change this unjust and unacceptable state of affairs. Individuals and nations have a legitimate right to live in peace in a world without nuclear weapons.

The progress that must be made in the sphere of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of weapons cannot be achieved by applying unilateral measures or through bilateral or regional agreements. Multilateralism and political solutions negotiated in multilateral organizations are essential in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The Conference on Disarmament has an important mandate that it must fulfil. The challenges to be met are not insurmountable. The Conference must, as a matter of urgency, adopt a broad and balanced programme of work that takes account of the real priorities in the field of disarmament. Within this programme, nuclear disarmament is a top priority for Cuba and the majority of States. The goal of banning and eliminating all nuclear weapons cannot continue to be indefinitely postponed and made subject to conditions: immediate concrete action is required. We support the immediate commencement of multilateral

negotiations leading to the early establishment of a convention that provides for the prohibition and elimination of all nuclear weapons within a specified time frame.

We are convinced that the Conference is ready to negotiate on several issues simultaneously. In addition to a convention on nuclear disarmament, we support the launching of negotiations, in this forum, on a treaty that prohibits an arms race in outer space, a treaty that provides legally binding security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States and a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, which would also apply to stocks of such material.

The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, under any circumstances, is a violation of international law and a crime against humanity. Programmes to modernize nuclear arsenals must be stopped and the role of such weapons in military doctrines and security policies must be eliminated. The only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination. To preserve peace, and for the sake of the survival of humanity, it is our duty to ensure that nuclear weapons are not used again under any circumstances.

The members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States will be strengthened by the formal proclamation of our region as a zone of peace. We are firmly committed to nuclear disarmament as a priority objective. The many activities carried out around the world every 26 September, the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, demonstrate the strong international support for nuclear disarmament.

We call on all members of the Conference to work jointly and constructively towards the adoption of far-reaching agreements on nuclear disarmament at an international high-level United Nations conference on nuclear disarmament, to be held no later than 2018.

I will conclude with the words used by the historic leader of the Cuban revolution, Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro, when he warned of the dangers of a nuclear conflagration: “No other period in human history resembles this one. If the risks in question are not understood by those who take decisions from the heights of the immense power that science and technology have placed in their hands, the next world war will surely be the last one.”

The President: I thank Director General Núñez Mosquera for his statement. I will now suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The plenary meeting is resumed. Before we conclude our business today, I see that the representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has asked for the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Jo Chol-su (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea): Mr. President, I have requested the floor to briefly respond to the statements on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea nuclear issue made by some delegations, including Finland.

We have already made clear our principled position on the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, and we urge the countries concerned to have an objective and unbiased understanding of the root cause, as well as an impartial assessment — rather than blindly standing with one side and simply blaming the other. It is therefore recommended to have a correct understanding of the history of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, which has been exposed to serious nuclear threat and the danger of war for many decades, and the reason why the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has decided to deploy nuclear weapons.

The international community should take issue with destabilizing and provocative measures based on a concrete and comprehensive understanding of the actual situation, and should call for adequate measures to discontinue dangerous moves. Simply accusing a sovereign State because of its just measures for self-defence without a fair appraisal of reality will be of no help in easing the tension in the Korean Peninsula and in achieving the goal of global peace and security. We will clarify on this issue next time.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

That concludes our business for this morning. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held tomorrow, Wednesday, 2 March, at 10 a.m., at which time we will hear statements from Colombia, Canada, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, Venezuela, Japan, Italy, Ukraine and Spain.

This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.