

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and forty-sixth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 16 September 2020, at 3.15 p.m.

President: Mr. Yury Ambrazevich (Belarus)



The President (*spoke in Russian*): I call to order the 1546th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Distinguished colleagues, I would like to take this opportunity to personally assure you, on behalf of the Belarusian Mission and our Government, of our full cooperation and our willingness to fully discharge the mandate of the President. I hope that, with your help, we can complete the main task of today's meeting, which is to adopt the report on the Conference's activities in 2020. This session of the Conference has been exceptional owing to the global health situation. I hope that today's meeting of the 2020 session will be successful and conclusive.

The draft report, which you have all received, has now been circulated in document CD/WP.629/Rev.4. We have discussed the document during one plenary meeting, several rounds of informal consultations with member States and many bilateral negotiations and consultations. I think it would be fair to begin today's plenary discussion by opening the floor to delegations that would like to speak in general terms about the report and the process leading up to the adoption of the report. Immediately after that, we will move on to consider the document paragraph by paragraph. I reserve the right, if necessary and in full understanding of the rules of procedure, to suspend our formal meeting with the possibility of continuing informal consultations, if that is what is required.

The secretariat has informed me that we have room XXVII at our disposal to use, if necessary, to continue informal consultations, including with our colleagues participating remotely, and then return to this chamber and report on the agreements reached. I hope this approach will be accepted.

I am confident that we should reach a consensus in this chamber today, and would like to continue our work, giving the floor first to the representative of the Russian Federation. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Mr. President. As regards the preparation of the report, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Belarusian presidency and the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament for their excellent work in agreeing on a draft. A lot of work has gone into finding language that is acceptable to all, including on highly sensitive matters. Herculean efforts have been made to incorporate the opinions of all States parties to the Conference. The current President of the Conference played an active role in this by holding numerous informal consultations to try and achieve mutually acceptable compromises on the wording. The Russian Federation is prepared to show flexibility and support the final version of the draft report. We call upon all delegations to do the same.

I would like to mention another important point. As we have said before, the founders of the Conference established the mechanism whereby observers may fully participate in substantive work for a reason. It was done so that our forum could not be accused of exclusivity and exceptionalism. The Russian position on this is very clear. Any State Member of the United Nations is entitled to take part in the work of our forum as an observer. We see this as yet another manifestation of true multilateralism and of the democratic foundations on which the entire United Nations system is built. Attempts to limit this right have a negative impact on the disposition of delegations to resolve the substantive issues so vital to the effective work of the Conference.

We operate on the understanding reached by the delegations that the report of the Conference's current session should be kept to a factual description and accurately reflect the reality of our work. A number of proposals made during the informal discussions on paragraph 11 of the draft could very well be used to find a compromise solution. By using them, States parties could demonstrate their resolve to reach a consensus and reduce the politicization of the Conference, which does only damage to its substantive work.

I have been asked to make the following statement on behalf of the Russian Federation regarding the comments of 12 August made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, which were circulated as an official document of the Conference under CD/2190:

"The conduct of combat training exercises by the fleet of the Russian Federation is a matter for the Russian Federation alone.

The Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol are integral parts of the Russian Federation. This is not open to discussion. They became part of the country in keeping with the will of their population, peoples of many nations, and in

accordance with international law. This decision is fully consistent with Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, in which “respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples” is proclaimed. Any attempt to question the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation is absolutely unacceptable. The choice of the people of Crimea and Sevastopol, who decided to join Russia, is fully legitimate.

We call on our partners to cease their attempts to demonize Russian military activity in the Black Sea. The nature of the Russian military presence in the region has not changed since Crimea was part of Ukraine. Of course, we are modernizing our forces and capabilities as facilities under the control of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are built in increasing proximity to the country’s borders. But our efforts are entirely in keeping with real defence and security needs. In addition, Russia attaches particular importance to confidence-building measures in the region, and, by inviting members of foreign militaries to observe the exercises, it is demonstrating the greatest possible degree of transparency. Whether or not to accept this invitation is a decision for our partners to make.

The politically motivated allegations of what the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on 12 August, called “deliberate steps to escalate tensions” in the Black Sea are being made against the backdrop of increasing military activity by Ukraine in the region. For example, Ukraine, together with NATO forces, is staging exercises involving simulated attacks, as well as actively upgrading its military facilities, building its military capabilities and testing new weapons systems. The Government of Ukraine, for the rest, is not denying that these systems are to be used in a fight with Russia.

This Ukrainian military activity, carried out with foreign support, clearly destabilizes the situation and shows disregard for obligations contracted under the military and political documents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. At forums provided by the Organization, we have stated that there is abundant evidence of violations by Ukraine of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security and of the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures.

Russia is in favour of maintaining peace and stability in the Black Sea region. We believe that the countries of the region, relying on existing cooperation mechanisms, are well equipped to address issues of common security on their own. We call on all Black Sea States to return to full-fledged cooperation within the framework of the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group, Operation Black Sea Harmony and the document on confidence- and security-building measures in the Black Sea.

Instead of engaging in political intrigue, Ukraine should focus on fulfilling its obligations under the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, put an immediate end to the punitive operation against civilians in the Donbass region, move weapons to designated storage sites, disarm all illegal groups and remove foreign military equipment and mercenaries from the country. There is an urgent need to lift the inhumane social, economic and transport blockade of the region, grant it special status and grant amnesty to its residents, in accordance with the Minsk Agreements. If political issues are not resolved, a comprehensive resolution of the crisis in Ukraine will be impossible. We underscore the direct responsibility of Ukraine for the practical implementation of all aspects of the Minsk Package of Measures and the decisions made at the Normandy format talks in Paris on 9 December 2019” – here ends the statement.

I would like the secretariat to issue this statement as an official document of the Conference and to include a reference to it in the draft final report. We have submitted the appropriate request to the secretariat.

Finally, I would like to respond to the statement of the delegation of Belarus at the last plenary meeting, presenting a draft General Assembly resolution entitled “Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons: report of the Conference on Disarmament”. We have studied the draft. It seems to be balanced. The amendments made are of a purely editorial nature and do not affect its substantive content. Based on our position regarding the previous resolutions,

the Russian Federation will support the current draft at the seventy-fifth session of the First Committee of the General Assembly and will be one of the co-sponsors.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Ambassador, for supporting the efforts of the Belarusian presidency and of all the members of the Conference on Disarmament in the drafting process for the Conference report. I hope that the final efforts will also be productive.

Regarding your request to include a document in the report, we are counting on all members of the Conference to transmit to the secretariat any documents they intend to submit as contributions to the report, ideally before its adoption. As an alternative, we would appreciate being informed of any intention to do so, so that the secretariat can inform the affected countries and give them enough time to respond.

I also thank the Russian Federation – I am saying this in my national capacity – for supporting my country's initiative for a General Assembly resolution on the subject of prohibiting new types of weapons of mass destruction.

Let us continue our discussion, if possible focusing on work on our report as a whole. I see that Ambassador Wood of the delegation of the United States of America is asking for the floor. He will be joining us remotely.

Mr. Wood (United States of America) (*via video link*): Thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership in these final months of the 2020 session. I particularly appreciate your delegation's hard work in drafting and finalizing our final report. The United States has shown much flexibility during the negotiations and we will continue to work with you and other colleagues to try to reach agreement on a final report.

Mr. President, the 2020 Conference on Disarmament session was undoubtedly impacted by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as was the work of every multilateral body and, for that matter, every workplace, the world over. For our part, the United States has found virtual and hybrid meetings to be an effective solution to the unprecedented circumstances.

My delegation and I, personally, would like to thank the Conference on Disarmament President, the secretariat and the United Nations Office at Geneva teams responsible for information technology and facilities for prioritizing our safety and making such remarkable efforts to find a way to allow us to continue to meet. Thank you also to all my colleagues for your flexibility and willingness to work in extraordinary circumstances.

We should be under no illusion, however, that it was because of COVID-19 that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to make substantive progress in 2020. It may have delayed discussions but it did not create the impasse we have faced for almost 30 years.

During the Australian presidency, Ambassador Mansfield led a survey on the future of the Conference on Disarmament – what it is and what it should accomplish. She presented several eye-opening conclusions that made it clear that the Conference faces a profound identity crisis. We lack consensus on such fundamentals as this body's mandate, what it should accomplish and how.

The United States was clear from the outset of this session that we must review the Conference's working methods if we are to have any hope of moving forward. We are not insisting on this review in order to stall or divert attention from our mandate. We are doing so in an attempt to get back to it. It is normal for bodies such as this one to periodically review their internal processes.

There is a full range of issues that could be addressed, including the length of the Conference on Disarmament presidency, possible criteria for holding the presidency, membership and a candid assessment of the core agenda items. While the United States is not advocating major changes to the Conference's organizational structure at this time, we are advocating discussion, recognizing that some adjustments might improve efficiency.

We also believe that the review should include an honest discussion about the unfortunate and inaccurate notion that any programme of work must be comprehensive and balanced. It ought to be clear that a body that has not negotiated anything in decades would be hard-pressed to negotiate on more than one issue. Let us not mince words: linking progress

on one issue to progress on others is the reason that negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty were blocked in 1999, and this body has remained stymied ever since.

Before COVID-19 hit Geneva, multiple delegations expressed support for the idea that the Conference on Disarmament could explore possible improvements to its working methods and membership questions. Those questions have not gone away and we should not shy away from dealing with them.

The Conference has not reached consensus on new arms control and disarmament initiatives. It is thus all the more important that the countries represented in this room should implement in full the agreements to which they are parties. One such agreement is the Chemical Weapons Convention. At a time when the prevailing security environment makes the negotiation of new agreements difficult, it is extremely disturbing that some countries are not honouring the obligations to which they have already agreed. Syria has repeatedly used chemical weapons. Russia employed a chemical weapon against two individuals on the territory of another State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The United States condemns the confirmed poisoning of Alexei Navalny in the strongest possible terms. We are confident in the chemical analysis of three laboratories which have now independently demonstrated the presence of a nerve agent from the Novichok group as the cause of Navalny's poisoning.

We reiterate that any use of chemical weapons, anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances, is unacceptable and contravenes international norms and standards. Bearing in mind the obligations that Russia has under the Chemical Weapons Convention, we call on it to cooperate with the international community's efforts to investigate this heinous act and reiterate that those responsible for this attack – both those who committed it and those who ordered it – must be held accountable. There can be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons. This is critical not only for the health of this one particular regime, but for arms control more generally.

The President (*spoke in Russian*) Thank you for your statement, Ambassador. Distinguished colleagues, given that we need to start and complete our work on the report, I call on you to use your right of reply once that work has been done. I am sure we will have time for that. I now give the floor to the delegation of Germany. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. I would also like to thank you for your endless efforts to move us towards consensus on the final report of the work of the Conference on Disarmament of this year; it seems to me that we have finally reached the finish line, so I hope that we will be able to adopt the report later this afternoon.

But, in addition, Mr. President, I am taking the floor to speak on the recent use of a chemical weapons agent in the Russian Federation. The poisoning of Alexei Navalny with a nerve agent of the Novichok group constitutes a grave violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The analysis of samples taken from Alexei Navalny that was carried out by a specialized laboratory of the German Armed Forces proved beyond any doubt that Mr. Navalny had been poisoned with a nerve agent of the Novichok group.

We therefore immediately informed the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) about the findings with a letter directed to the Director-General, Ambassador Arias. OPCW has also taken samples from Mr. Navalny and is currently analysing them through its network of designated laboratories.

In the meantime, our partners, France and Sweden, have already independently confirmed the German findings through analyses in their own specialized laboratories.

My Government has condemned this attack on Mr. Navalny in the strongest possible terms. Many States, as well as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have joined us in this reaction. I would also like to recall the joint press statement made by the Foreign Ministers of France and Germany on 4 September 2020 in which they reaffirm that any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and contravenes international norms and call upon the Russian authorities to guarantee the exercise of the fundamental civil and political rights of their population.

My Government continues to call upon Russia to disclose to the international community the circumstances in which a chemical weapon was used on its territory, in grave

violation of international law. The perpetrators must be held to account. We call upon Russia to work with OPCW to provide full transparency.

In closing, Mr. President, I would like to request that this statement be made an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. Please transmit the text to the secretariat.

Distinguished colleagues, before moving directly to consideration of the draft report, two delegations have requested the floor: France and then Sweden. I am counting on your understanding and the willingness of any delegation who wishes to respond to do so after we finish working on the report. Distinguished Ambassador of France, you have the floor.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. I will begin with a brief word of thanks for revised version 4 of your draft report, which we received this afternoon. You have done absolutely remarkable work which shows and confirms your talent as a negotiator and we thank you for that. We are prepared to join the consensus on this text, which is acceptable to us. I must say that we were a little surprised by the way some parts of the draft were negotiated and by the attitude of certain delegations, which are twisting reality on the pretext of joining the consensus and, as some speakers have already said, are politicizing this forum.

I will now turn to the next part of my statement. My German colleague has just mentioned the joint communiqué by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of France and Germany. I would like to briefly recall its content. It was a statement released on 4 September 2020 regarding the poisoning with toxic chemical agents of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny, who is currently receiving medical care in Germany. Both our ministers were appalled by this attack on Mr. Navalny, which constitutes a most serious blow against the basic principles of democracy and political pluralism. They noted that this attack on the physical integrity of a Russian opposition figure was sadly not an isolated incident. They expressed in this context their expectation that the Russian authorities will guarantee the conditions for the exercise of fundamental civil and political rights by the Russian people. They reiterated and reaffirmed the fact that the use of chemical weapons, anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstances whatsoever, is unacceptable and contravenes the international norms prohibiting the use of such weapons. This new incident involving a Novichok nerve agent is profoundly shocking. The two ministers reaffirmed their full support for the absolute prohibition of the use of chemical weapons, the tenet underlying the Chemical Weapons Convention, which was negotiated in this very chamber, and whose States parties are obliged to ensure its full and complete implementation on their national territory.

As a first step, it is essential that Russia, on whose territory this new violation of international law took place, urgently clarifies in full the facts and responsibilities behind this assassination attempt on a member of the Russian political opposition using a military-grade nerve agent that belongs to a group of agents developed by Russia. Those responsible for this odious act must be identified and brought to justice. The two ministers recalled their engagement in the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, under the auspices of which they will work on joint initiatives.

I would like this statement to be included in the report for this session.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. Please transmit your written statement to the secretariat in electronic format. Distinguished colleagues, since I informed you that there were two requests for the floor, the list has changed. After the representative of Sweden has taken the floor, we will hear from the United Kingdom and then the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ms. Lindegren (Sweden): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, we would like to thank you for your hard work on the Conference on Disarmament report that we hope can be adopted by consensus later this afternoon.

Sweden sees the Conference on Disarmament as the central part of the disarmament machinery. However, if the Conference on Disarmament is to stay relevant in the future, we need to make progress on substance. And now, to another question.

Mr. President, the Swedish Defense Research Agency (FOI) received a bilateral request from the German authorities to carry out an independent analysis of the samples collected from the poisoned Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny.

The analysis conducted by FOI – like the one carried out by the French authorities – confirms the results published by the German authorities that Navalny had been poisoned by the neurotoxin Novichok. Germany has requested technical assistance from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Sweden has full confidence in the German authorities' handling of this matter.

The use of neurotoxins is a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is thus a violation of international law. It is of the utmost importance that those responsible should be held to account.

We expect Russia to launch a credible investigation as soon as possible and to cooperate in a complete and transparent manner in the forthcoming OPCW investigation.

And Mr. President, I would ask that this statement be made part of the official records of the Conference.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Sweden. As I said earlier, please transmit your written statement to the secretariat as soon as possible. Ambassador of the United Kingdom, you have the floor.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me begin by thanking you and your team for the work you have done to get us to a place where I hope we will be able to adopt our report by consensus later this afternoon.

As has been mentioned, it has been a more difficult process than I think many of us had hoped, but it is testament to your skill and persistence that we see a successful conclusion in sight. I confirm that the United Kingdom is ready to join a consensus on the draft that you circulated earlier this afternoon.

Mr. President, over the past three weeks, the United Kingdom too has followed with deep concern the case of Alexei Navalny. We have now received confirmation from the German Government and, as we have heard this afternoon, from the French and Swedish authorities, that Mr. Navalny was the victim of an attack with a chemical weapon of the Novichok group, a type of nerve agent previously used with lethal effect in the United Kingdom. It is deplorable that a banned chemical weapon has been used again.

As the body that negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Conference on Disarmament should be deeply concerned that the hard-won prohibition against the use of these horrific weapons should be under attack yet again. The use of a chemical weapon in this way, regardless of where it takes place, engages the international obligations of the Russian Federation as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Any use of chemical weapons by a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention is a clear violation of its freely assumed international obligations.

The Russian Government has a clear case to answer and it must tell the truth about what happened to Mr. Navalny. It is important that justice should be done and the perpetrators of this action should be held to account.

We will work closely with Germany, our allies and international partners, to demonstrate that there is accountability and there are consequences for any use of banned chemical weapons anywhere in the world.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, United Kingdom. I give the floor to the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation appreciates all your efforts in steering our collective consultations towards finalizing the draft report of the Conference on Disarmament, and we particularly appreciate the revised version 4, provided just this afternoon.

Mr. President, we affirm the role and mandate of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum devoted to disarmament, and we urge all Conference on Disarmament members who value the rule of law, international law-based order and multilateralism to demonstrate political will in order to advance the mandate of the

Conference on Disarmament, by adopting a comprehensive, balanced and inclusive programme of work on four core issues in next year's session, in accordance with the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Mr. President, as we approach the end of the 2020 session of the Conference on Disarmament, we regret that the Conference has again failed to break its long stalemate owing to a lack of political will and a sense of responsibility on the part of certain nuclear-weapon actors. The continuing dominance of radical unilateralism in the foreign policy of the United States has negatively affected many multilateral institutions, including this body. No State that values international law, the rule of law at the international level and international peace and security can remain indifferent to this destructive and malign approach.

The United States regime's obsession with destroying multilateral institutions and discrediting the United Nations was very recently manifested in its ill-advised attempt to unilaterally demolish United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). It first tried to force the Security Council to undo certain parts of that resolution in the hope that the move would lead to the annihilation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. That attempt failed, thanks to the general recognition by the Council's membership that the move by the United States was absolutely baseless, totally unjustified, legally invalid and would have extreme consequences for the credibility and functioning of the Security Council.

Mr. President, the United States has now made another malevolent attempt to bully the whole international community, abusing the provisions of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which it illegally abandoned in May 2018, to deliver a fatal last blow to the Plan. The response of the overwhelming majority of members of the Security Council was responsible and thoughtful. We hope that they all recognize their historic responsibility in defending the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the basic tenets of law and justice, against the malice of those who have long wanted to crush the fundamental principles of multilateralism and the rule of law.

Mr. President, our position on the draft report of the Conference is clear, and we hope that the final report will be adopted later this afternoon. We are still of the view that the best practice regarding paragraph 4 is to mention the names of the members of the Conference on Disarmament who served as the Presidents during the 2020 session. We are not against paragraph 5 as it is proposed but, after almost 40 years of activities, it is very strange if the Conference on Disarmament is not allowed to name its Presidents.

It is very unfortunate that the Conference is being manipulated by one delegation, which opposes reflecting the names of the six Presidents in paragraph 4 but, at the same time, accepts that the names of those same six Presidents are mentioned in other paragraphs. I would also like to say that, if the Presidents of the 2020 session have compromised, agreeing not to have their names stated in paragraph 4, this should not be interpreted in any way as setting a precedent for the future. We believe that paragraph 5 is not a substitute for paragraph 4.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The delegation of the Russian Federation is asking for the floor in exercise of its right of reply.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Mr. President. Here in this chamber, several of our colleagues (from the United States of America and a number of Western European countries) have spoken on the subject of the supposed poisoning of the opposition figure Navalny with a chemical weapon in the territory of the Russian Federation. There have been calls upon Russia to investigate, take measures, punish and so on.

I would like to draw the attention of those distinguished colleagues who are making such bold statements that Russia is no less committed than their countries to implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention and is prepared to cooperate with anyone on this matter. However, cooperation entails information-sharing.

It is no secret that the procuratorial service of the Russian Federation has been in contact with the German authorities, proposing cooperation in the investigation of the alleged incident. The procuratorial service of the Russian Federation has not received any response to this request from Germany. Is that supposed to show that the German authorities are prepared to cooperate with Russia? It is extremely doubtful.

Instead, we hear unfounded calls on Russia to “clarify in full”, as the representative of France has just said, the use of chemical weapons. Let us “clarify in full”, let us cooperate. You are making statements among yourselves and sharing information, but no one wants to cooperate with Russia on this matter. What honest and objective investigation can there be, if no cooperation on the subject is being offered?

The aim is very simple – it is just to blame Russia. Our British colleagues came up with expressions like “highly likely” a while ago, and they are still trying to push the same narrative. It is just not possible to work on such a serious matter as an investigation into the possible use of chemical weapons in this manner. So, if our partners genuinely want to “clarify in full”, as the representative of France put it, the use of chemical weapons, let us act together. Russia has expressed its willingness to do so more than once. For the moment, our partners, particularly Germany, have not given any response or shown any such willingness to cooperate.

I will repeat once again that Russia is no less committed than anyone else to implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention and strictly abides by its provisions.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Ambassador. The delegation of Ukraine has the floor. Following that, the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic will speak, and the delegation of the United States of America has made a request to exercise its right of reply.

Mr. Klymenko (Ukraine): Thank you, Mr. President. In response to the statement made by the Russian Federation, our delegation would like to reserve the right of reply.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Ukraine. I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Ms. Mohammad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. In response to the accusation by the representative of the United States that my country is using chemical weapons, the Syrian Arab Republic categorically denies the accusation and reiterates that it has not used any chemical weapons and that it has not possessed such weapons since its accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2013.

Having completely eliminated its chemical programme under the supervision of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Syria is committed to the Convention and continues to cooperate and engage in dialogue with the Organisation’s technical secretariat in this regard.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. I give the floor to the delegation of the United States of America. Ambassador, speaking remotely, you have the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America) (*via video link*): Thank you, Mr. President. I apologize for taking the floor but I need to exercise my right of reply to respond to remarks made by the representative of Iran.

First of all, Iran, as we all know, is the world’s leading State sponsor of terrorism and hostage-taking. It is in no position to make charges about anything in the international community against the United States.

The views of the United States on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action are well known but let me be clear: the United States will do everything in its power to ensure that Iran can no longer continue to import and export arms and continue its worldwide reign of terror. We are committed to that. We want to see a peaceful region in the Middle East. Iran’s behaviour, its activities and its support for terror undermine the aspirations of the people in that region. We therefore believe very strongly that the embargo needs to remain in place. The United States is committed to making sure Iran cannot continue to fund and practise terrorism, not only in the Middle East, but in the rest of the world.

And just to respond very briefly to the remarks made by the representative of Syria: it is absurd that Syria continues to deny the fact that it has used chemical weapons repeatedly against its own people. Its comments are just not believable, they are not serious, and the international community is going to insist that those in Syria who have used chemical weapons against their own people are held to account.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you to the United States of America. Distinguished colleagues, I propose to give you one opportunity to take the floor in exercise

of your right of reply before moving onto discussion of the report. You will have the opportunity to continue political debates after we finish working on the report. I rely on your understanding. Ambassador of Germany, you have the floor.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. Before I respond to the intervention of my Russian colleague, let me just ask for clarification. As far as I am aware, the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament do not foresee rights of reply in the same way as in the First Committee, but just allow delegations to make statements; I am not aware that this right is limited to just one intervention. Could you just clarify on that point before I continue?

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Of course, and I did not say I was going to limit it. I was referring only to the present round of statements.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Thank you very much, Mr. President for that clarification. In response to the statement that has just been made by my Russian colleague, I would just like to react very briefly.

The Navalny case started in Russia. Mr. Navalny, as we all know, lost consciousness on a Russian plane. He was treated in a Russian hospital, not just very briefly but for some time so Russian medical personnel certainly have at their disposal all the necessary health information about what happened to Mr. Navalny prior to boarding a plane and why he lost consciousness and fell into the state in which he was in the hospital. He was then transported to Germany upon the request of his family and treated in the Charité university hospital in Berlin.

This case is certainly not a bilateral issue between Germany and the Russian Federation. The violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention makes it an international issue, Mr. President. And this is why Germany has consequently engaged the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the strength of article 8 of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

And in closing, I would like to say that, given the foregoing and also in fulfilment of German law, Germany is in no way obstructing or hindering any investigation into the case. So, we are now looking forward to the results of the analyses from the two OPCW designated laboratories.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran has the floor.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. I wish to exercise my right of reply to the remarks made by the United States Ambassador. Let us see who it is talking about terrorism. I think reference to some quotes by United States leaders might clarify everything. I refer what to Hillary Rodham Clinton, the former Secretary of State, said, and I am quoting her remarks exactly:

Let's remember here, the people we are fighting today, we funded them twenty years ago. And we did it because we were locked in a struggle with the Soviet Union. And we went to work. Sounds like a pretty good idea. Let's deal ... let's go to recruit these mujahidin. Let's get some to come from Saudi Arabia and other places, importing their Wahabbi brand of Islam.

I also want to refer to remarks made by the President, Donald Trump. On 17 July 2016, Donald Trump said Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are the founders of ISIS.

Mr. President, I would like to use this opportunity to mention another point. We are living in a world where the President of the country that has the most sophisticated weapons of mass destruction is proudly talking about assassinating leaders of other countries and, in fact, has already committed such a crime.

On 14 September 2020, the President of the United States of America made a baseless allegation against the Islamic Republic of Iran and threatened to use force against my country. Such a provocative statement constitutes a gross violation of the very fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, particularly its Article 2 (4), which clearly prohibits the threat or use of force.

Of course, this is not the first time that the President of the United States has threatened to use force against Iran. Following the horrific assassination of Major General Qasem

Soleimani, he threatened on five different occasions to use force against Iran. We seriously warned against any further military adventurism against Iran by the United States, who must bear the full responsibility for all consequences.

The irresponsible policy and unlawful practice of the United States pose a serious threat to international peace, security and stability. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the United Nations Security Council to demand that the United States put an end to its threats and its provocative and destabilizing policies and hold the United States authorities accountable for its wrongful and very dangerous acts.

The Islamic Republic of Iran will not hesitate to exercise its inherent right to self-defence to protect its people, defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity and secure its national interests against any aggression.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. I see the delegation of Germany again. You have the floor.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President and I apologize for taking the floor again but I would like to specify now what I have just said in more general terms and this is with regard to the allegation of my Russian colleague that the German Government is not cooperating with the Russian Federation in respect of its request for legal assistance. That is not the case and the specifics are as follows.

The Russian request for legal assistance is being worked on by the competent German authorities and we are keeping Russia continuously informed on that matter, for example, through a meeting of our permanent undersecretary with the Russian Ambassador in Berlin, Ambassador Nechayev, that took place today, 16 September.

So, we do not really understand the continued Russian allegations that we are playing for time or that we are not cooperating. The competent German authorities are working on the Russian request for legal assistance, in strict conformity with German law – which also refers to the obligation of doctors not to share information about the medical status of their patient unless specifically authorized by the patient to do so.

So, as you can see, there are quite some difficult issues to deal with but – and I am saying this for the third time – my Government is fully cooperating with the Russian Federation. Moreover, first and foremost, this incident and this abhorrent use of a chemical weapon is not a bilateral issue but an issue of international concern that has to be dealt with by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which has competence in respect of upholding of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Ukraine. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. Klymenko (Ukraine): Thank you, Mr. President. I take the floor to react to some allegations made earlier by the representative of the Russian Federation with regard to my country. First of all, I would like to be crystal clear. As you well know, Crimea is Ukraine. And I would like in this regard to draw the attention of the members of the Conference on Disarmament to resolution 68/262 of 27 March 2014, in which the General Assembly expresses its clear support for the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and notes that the so-called Crimea referendum of 16 March 2014 had no validity; it furthermore calls upon all States, international organizations and specialized agencies not to recognize any alteration of the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol.

I would like also to remind you of General Assembly resolutions 73/194, adopted on 17 December 2018, and 74/17, adopted on 9 December 2019, on the problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and resolutions 71/205, 72/190 and 73/263 on the situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine. The latter, in particular, call upon all international organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, when referring to Crimea in their official documents, communications and publications, including with regard to statistical data of the Russian Federation, to refer to “the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation” and encourage all States and other international organizations to do the same.

We urge the Russian Federation to halt its aggression against my country and implement the above-mentioned and other documents adopted by the United Nations on that matter.

As we already mentioned, Russia has been carrying out progressive militarization in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and these disruptive actions include military exercises by the Black Sea fleet of the Russian Federation in the territories of the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as destabilizing transfers by the Russian side of weapons systems, notably nuclear-capable aircraft and missiles, other weaponry, munitions and military personnel into the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

Pursuant to the agreement between Ukraine and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the application of safeguards in connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on the whole territory of Ukraine, it is prohibited to deploy nuclear weapons or divert nuclear materials and facilities of Ukraine for military purposes. Ukraine therefore calls upon the international community to urge Russia to abstain from any actions connected with violation of the nuclear-free status of any part of the territory of Ukraine, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol.

I also would like to mention and to draw attention to the violation by the Russian Federation of the Budapest Memorandum, which sends a very negative signal for the non-proliferation of weapons throughout the world.

Last but not least, the issue of the poisoning of the Russian opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, has been raised by many delegations today and, on behalf of my delegation, I would like to say that these recent events related to the poisoning of this person once again prove that human life, safety and dignity are of no value to the Russian authorities.

Ukraine fully trusts the results of the in-depth analysis of Alexei Navalny's biological samples performed by the Laboratory of the German Armed Forces, as well as the independent studies conducted by specialized laboratories in France and Sweden, which have unequivocally confirmed poisoning caused by the use of a nerve agent. We also welcome the involvement of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the investigation and look forward to the results of the relevant analyses to be received from the OPCW designated laboratories.

Ukraine reiterates its firm position that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, is a gross violation of international law and should be strongly condemned. Those responsible for such a gross violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention should be punished. Given the high likelihood of involvement of the Russian Federation in the poisoning, Ukraine calls on the international community to continue coordinated pressure on Russia to stop threatening world security and violating international law by means of aggression against its own citizens and other States.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic has the floor.

Ms. Mohammad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would just like to recall that the United States of America is well known for its use of weapons of mass destruction, as history has shown, and for punishing international judges involved in its cases. It is therefore hardly in a position to talk about accountability for the use of chemical or other weapons.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. The delegation of Saudi Arabia has the floor.

Mr. Almadhi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to use the right of reply in respect of the statement by the representative of Iran, who made a number of accusations against the Kingdom. I would like to point out that the Republic of Iran is the last country that can speak about peace in the region. Just last Thursday, the Kingdom intercepted a number of missiles sent by the Iranian-backed Houthi group. Iran is carrying out such actions and supports all militias in the Middle East region. We are talking about the largest State sponsor of terrorism in the region – Iran.

Iran operates on both ends of the spectrum. It claims that it is concerned about humanitarian conditions everywhere, and then supports terrorist militias in the region, in the Middle East in particular. The Houthi militia and Hizbullah are the most obvious examples,

both terrorist militias to which Iran provides support in the form of weapons and money. The representative of Iran comes before us speaking of peace, while we witness militias carrying out the most horrific and grave humanitarian violations.

I would like to refer to the statement by the ambassador of the United States about Iran and its conduct in the region. It is absolutely true that if the arms embargo against Iran is lifted and the country is able to buy and export weapons, it will be catastrophic for the Middle East region. I call on all States to take seriously the hostile behaviour by Iran and to consider the general interests of the region.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. I give the floor to the delegation of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America) (*via video link*): Thank you, Mr. President. Once again, I apologize for taking the floor, but I need to respond to comments made by the representative of Iran. I will ignore most of the first part of his charges because we have heard them before, not only here but in New York, in the meetings of the First Committee. But I do want to address the issue of the Charter of the United Nations. Iran claims to be an upholder of the Charter, but, over the years, representatives of the Iranian Government have called for the destruction and removal from the map of the State of Israel. I would just like to say that, in my understanding, calling for the destruction of another Member State of the United Nations is indeed a clear violation of the Charter. So, when we hear representatives of Iran talking about how they support multilateralism and how they are peace-loving, the facts just do not add up.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran has the floor.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. In response to our colleague from Saudi Arabia, I do not want to waste the precious time of this august body by answering the absurd and irrelevant allegation that he repeated, particularly as he did so simply as a proxy for other delegations. I would only say for the record that the non-member States who are given the chance to participate in this august body as observers should avoid abusing the Conference on Disarmament by making irrelevant and baseless claims against other States.

Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, I take this opportunity instead to ask our Saudi colleague, in line with the philosophy and core mandate of the Conference on Disarmament, to adopt a transparent and open approach regarding his own country's nuclear programme and cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. We also reiterate our calls to IAEA to shoulder its responsibility in this regard. And we advise the Saudi authorities to stop wreaking war and bloodshed on their innocent Yemeni neighbours.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Almadhi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. I apologize for taking the floor again, but I wanted to respond to my colleague, the representative of Iran. Saudi Arabia does not have strained relations with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Rather, it is Iran that has strained relations not only with the International Atomic Energy Agency, but with all organizations and the rest of the world. This is the truth and we must not lose sight of it. Saudi Arabia has very strong relations with the International Atomic Energy Agency and reciprocal visits are conducted. None of the Agency's reports have anything negative to say about the Kingdom, whereas they contain many negative remarks about Iran.

With regard to Yemen, we point out to the representative of Iran that Saudi Arabia has not supported any militias in the region in order to exert its influence. Iran, however, has supported a particular militia in order to impose control through smuggled Iranian weapons. A number of friendly countries and coalition forces have succeeded in intercepting Iranian ships and seizing Iranian smuggled weapons intended to destroy Yemen and the children of Yemen. The coalition supports a legitimate Government recognized by the United Nations and not a radical militia that calls for the destruction of other countries and the killing of their peoples, such as Hizbullah in Lebanon, which is supported by Iran. That is all I had to say, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. I give the floor to the delegation of Cuba.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I would like to thank you for the excellent work done by the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and especially for your patience. Thanks to your leadership, it has been possible once again to hold our meetings quite frequently, despite the transparent pretexts that some have employed to prevent that from happening.

Mr. President, my delegation hopes that we can adopt the report today, no thanks to the so-called flexibility of certain parties, since there is no flexibility in irrationality. Unfortunately, in the midst of a global pandemic, we have devoted many hours to intense discussions simply because politicization has become the rule rather than the exception in our work. The current debate is no different: this forum is being used to express political views and to trade accusations on any subject that suits us, in a game of geopolitical discourse, while ignoring disarmament and non-proliferation obligations and, in particular, the aspiration to a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, the Conference's problems have nothing to do with its mandate. It has a clear and unique mandate to negotiate legally binding instruments, although some members deliberately ignore or fail to fulfil their obligations to this forum. This relates to a state of mind in which we divert attention from substantive issues to political matters that are not relevant to our mandate and which could or should be aired in other forums, or to secondary or procedural issues within the Conference, none of which have the ultimate goal of negotiating legally binding disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, which is our unique mandate.

Mr. President, the reason why we have not fulfilled our mandate for more than two decades is the clear political stance of those who want to negotiate only the instruments that suit their narrow national interests, without considering the other interests of other parties. We have been in this meeting for an hour and a half now. One might say that this is a dialogue of the deaf, though I beg the forgiveness of people who have this physical impairment and whose aptitude for dialogue is surely greater than we are showing at present.

Selfishness and political short-sightedness are the reason for the stagnation of our work, and are present in the arguments that are made against mentioning in our report the Presidents of the Conference, or multilateralism – a basic principle that is the reason we are gathered here. In stubbornness there is no merit other than ignorance. When we adopt the report, Cuba will clearly and transparently make known its views on the adoption process for which we have convened today. In conclusion, Mr. President, Cuba reiterates its full commitment to the Conference and hopes that this forum will, in the near future, begin serious, broad and comprehensive negotiations on all the agenda items, in accordance with its mandate.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Cuba. I give the floor to the delegation of the Russian Federation and then to the representative of Mexico. Distinguished colleagues, once again I would urge you to give some consideration to the report. This will probably only be possible once we are done with these political debates. Thank you very much. The Russian Federation has the floor.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Mr. President. I will be brief. My delegation could give a long, methodical and detailed reply to all the calls, groundless accusations and so on that have been made and keep us in this chamber for a long time, growing tired of this political discussion. I would like to call upon all States parties and all delegations present in the Chamber to move onto our main agenda item, which right now is the approval of the report, and begin that work with no further political discussions.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the Russian Federation. The delegation of Mexico has the floor.

Mr. Martínez Ruiz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, the delegation of Mexico sincerely appreciates the intensive effort you have made during your presidency. There is no doubt that you and your team have been responsible, committed and transparent in how you have conducted the work, particularly with regard to the negotiation of the report. We also wish to reiterate our appreciation of the close and efficient cooperation between the six presidencies of 2020 and our hope that this will become

established as a best practice, which would greatly benefit the Conference on Disarmament in the future.

My delegation acknowledges the difficult circumstances arising from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the significant impact it has had on the work of all multilateral forums, including the Conference. Nevertheless, even though our work has been limited, we can see from the formal meetings and from the negotiation of the report that the Conference is still lacking the political will that is needed to deliver it from its deadlock of more than two decades.

The informal negotiations on the report have again highlighted the excessive importance that is attached to questions of form, demonstrating how far we remain from the real negotiations that are required by our mandate, and which are particularly important in the current climate of instability and geopolitical confrontation. The extensive discussion of issues that other bodies accept automatically, such as mentioning the countries that held the presidency or acknowledging the importance of multilateral diplomacy, which is the very nature of this forum, is a clear example of this worrying situation.

Finally, my delegation has consistently supported both the expansion of the Conference's membership and the full access of observers to its work. The Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament – a document that was supported by all delegations – recognizes that ending the arms race and, in particular, holding disarmament negotiations, are in the interest and are the responsibility of the entire international community. We therefore regret that bilateral or regional disputes are brought to the Conference, that this negotiating body is politicized and that, in practice, States Members of the United Nations are excluded from participating in its work.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, representative of Mexico. I see no more requests for the floor. I would therefore like to move on to considering the issues that have not yet been resolved through a consensus at our informal consultations.

We have circulated the latest draft available to the presidency as revision 4. I hope you all have it in front of you; I draw your attention to it once again and invite all interested parties to work on paragraphs 4, 5, 8 and 11, which have yet to be approved. Given the nature of the most recent discussions about paragraphs 4 and 5, which were considered together, I would like to give you the opportunity to comment on those paragraphs specifically, hoping that you will support the proposed wording.

I urge you to express yourselves clearly: are there any objections and are there any concrete proposals for amendments? I very much hope that this wording will receive general support. The delegation of the United States of America has the floor.

Ms. McKernan (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. With regard to paragraph 4, the United States agrees with what is written; with regard to paragraph 5, we are still awaiting instructions.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the delegation of the United States of America. Are there any other comments? The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran has the floor.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. Regarding paragraph 4, our position is clear: we think that the best practice is to mention the names of the six Presidents there. We emphasize that we are not against paragraph 5 as it is proposed, but, for the record, I have to say that, after almost 40 years, it is unfortunate that the Conference on Disarmament is not allowed to capture the names of its Presidents in the report; it is unfortunate that this august body has been manipulated by one delegation. We do not understand the logic behind that delegation's position: while it accepts the inclusion of the Presidents' names in some other paragraphs, it still opposes them being mentioned in paragraph 4. If the Presidents of the 2020 session have compromised, agreeing not to have their names stated in paragraph 4, this should not be interpreted in any way as setting a precedent for the future. We believe that paragraph 5 is not a substitute for paragraph 4.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I give the floor to the delegation of South Africa.

Mr. September (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President, and once again I want to applaud your efforts in trying to get to a consensus report. Regarding paragraph 4, we are not

happy with it but we can live with it. It is not ideal but we can accept it on condition that the proposal that was made by, I think, Cuba regarding paragraph 5 is accepted.

We also want to take this opportunity to put it on record that we too would like to see the names of all the Presidents in the report as per the practice of previous years. We feel it is important because it is factual and it gives a much better kind of report if the names of the Presidents are reflected in paragraph 4.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. I do not see any more delegations asking for the floor. Based on the comments made by the delegation of the United States of America saying that more time is required for them to receive a reply from their capital, I think that we should allow them that right.

I therefore suggest that we move onto the next paragraph, number 8. Do you have any objections to the provisional adoption of the version circulated today? I do not see any delegations requesting the floor. I suggest we assume that the paragraph has received provisional approval pending its formal adoption.

Accordingly, I would like to move onto part C of our report, paragraph 11, in the version circulated by the President: do you have any objections to the wording used in paragraph 11? I see no objections. That means that we can provisionally adopt paragraph 11 as worded in the version we circulated.

That leaves us with two unapproved paragraphs, numbers 4 and 5, and I have a technical question for the delegation of the United States of America at this stage: when do you expect to be able to receive a reply from your capital regarding your position on paragraph 5?

Ms. McKernan (United States of America): I apologize, Mr. President: I do not have the timeline at this moment, but I will let you know as soon as I do.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. The delegation of Cuba has the floor.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Given that Washington, D.C. is in a similar time zone to Havana and it is the middle of the working day there, I propose that the most convenient thing would be to suspend the meeting for five minutes so that the delegation of the United States of America can make a call to the State Department or the White House on this very complex issue, and thus be able to take a decision. I say this because the paragraph that you have just proposed is something that was drafted only this morning and all of us here have quite a few important issues to address.

Furthermore, while I might say that the report is not in Spanish and therefore my delegation cannot adopt it, the fact that the report is in English makes it easier for the delegation of the United States to consult on this issue. For that reason I believe that – out of basic respect – it is important that the delegation consults with its capital, with the haste that often characterizes it, and obtains an answer. If we do not have an answer in 5 or 10 minutes, I would propose that we adopt the report ad referendum, and if the United States has any further issues, it can raise them in New York. In my view, the important thing is to close this topic at this meeting, because this is our last scheduled plenary meeting and it is a necessary formality that the report be adopted at a plenary meeting such as this.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the delegation of Cuba. Based on the reply from my distinguished colleague from the United States, I suggest we begin the paragraph-by-paragraph adoption of our report on the understanding that paragraphs 4 and 5 will be considered at the very end of this process. Are there any objections to this procedure?

There are no objections. Let us begin with the table of contents. The delegation of South Africa has requested the floor.

Mr. September (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. We are not objecting, we just wanted to recall the principle that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the delegation of South Africa. That is of course one of the guiding principles for our work. The delegation of Cuba has the floor.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. I apologize for requesting the floor again. My delegation would never block a working

suggestion of yours, and it considers that the proposal made by the delegation of South Africa, together with its subsequent clarification, is sufficient. In truth, we will not be in a position to definitively adopt any paragraph until we adopt the report as a whole. We have been quite flexible on several issues.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. Distinguished colleagues, guided by the principle that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed, let us move to a paragraph-by-paragraph consideration of the draft report, leaving the adoption of paragraphs 4 and 5 until the very end, in the hope that we will receive a reply on the subject from the delegation in question and will be able to either continue our work to agree on the wording or finalize the adoption of the report.

Please start by turning to the table of contents on page 1 of the circulated document. Are there any objections or comments? There are not. Allow me to use the gavel to express the main thrust of our work. Afterwards, we will of course be guided by the unfolding situation in the Chamber.

Introduction. Paragraph 1. Are there any objections, observations or comments? Thank you, there are none.

Part II, section A, paragraph 2. Any objections or remarks? There are not. We can move forward.

Paragraph 3. The blank will be filled in by the secretariat based on the outcome of today's meeting. There are no objections.

Paragraph 6. There are no objections.

Paragraph 7. There are no objections.

Paragraph 8. There are no objections.

Paragraph 9. There are no objections.

Paragraph 10. There are no objections.

Paragraph 11. There are no objections.

Paragraph 12. There are no objections.

Paragraph 13. There are no objections.

Paragraph 14. There are no objections.

Paragraph 15. There are no objections.

Paragraph 16. There are no objections.

Paragraph 17. There are no objections.

Paragraph 18. There are no objections.

Paragraph 19. There are no objections.

Paragraph 20. There are no objections.

Paragraph 21. There are no objections.

Paragraph 22. There are no objections.

Paragraph 23. There are no objections.

Paragraph 24. There are no objections.

Paragraph 25. There are no objections.

Paragraph 26. There are no objections.

Paragraph 27. There are no objections.

Paragraph 28. There are no objections.

Paragraph 29. There are no objections.

Paragraph 30. There are no objections.

Paragraph 31. There are no objections.

Paragraph 32. There are no objections.

Paragraph 33. There are no objections or additions.

Paragraph 34. There are no objections.

Paragraph 35. There are no objections.

Paragraph 36. There are no objections.

Paragraph 37. There are no objections.

Paragraph 38. There are no objections.

Paragraph 39. There are no objections.

Paragraph 40. There are no objections.

Paragraph 41. There are no objections.

Paragraph 42. There are no objections.

Paragraph 43. There are no objections.

Paragraph 44. There are no objections.

Paragraph 45. There are no objections.

Paragraph 46. There are no objections.

Cuba, you have the floor for paragraph 46.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to know whether you intend to review the appendices at this time. I have a query that perhaps you or the secretariat could answer. Why is the first appendix that is mentioned in the report referred to as appendix II? There is no mention of appendix I in paragraphs 1, 2 or 3. I do not know if it is a problem with the numbering, but I think it would be appropriate to resolve the matter.

Another issue that is slightly more substantive, and which I would like my colleagues to consider, is that the appendices are presented in such a way that we do not know what they are about. In other words, I think it would be helpful to add a heading to both appendix II and appendix III explaining what they are. In appendix II, which is my main concern, the heading could read “Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament 2019–2020”. I would also not have any problem with stating the dates of each presidency and the names of the Ambassadors next to each country because, as it stands, this list of countries looks almost like a footnote and the reader does not understand why it is there. Furthermore, even though I know that the issue of appendix III is a sensitive one, I think it would be helpful to state at the top that this is the record of the meeting in question, in order to explain what comes below. I would like to make that proposal as an oral amendment, to see if we can reach a consensus.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the Cuban delegation for its attention to detail in our work.

I would like to reply with respect to appendix I. If you look at paragraph 25, it concerns all the documents submitted or presented for consideration to the Conference on Disarmament or brought to its attention. For the moment, there is no number there. Traditionally, this is the appendix that contains all the documents issued for the session and will accordingly be appendix I. Today, we have heard from a number of delegations who have stated their intention to submit or have already submitted their documents to the secretariat. Those will all be included in this appendix I.

Regarding the list of countries mentioned in appendix II, I think that the Cuban delegation and other distinguished colleagues can imagine the work that went into making it possible to agree on paragraphs 4 and 5. We very much hope they will be agreed on. The subject of appendix II is made clear in paragraph 4. The secretariat will adopt the normal practice, as it has done and continues to do, in indicating appendices. If there is a consensus in the Chamber that we should indicate the names and dates of the presidencies, then the President will of course support that consensus. The process we have been through does not convince me that it is necessary.

Appendix III, paragraph 11, for which the process of agreement between the interested delegations was very difficult, as indeed it was for the whole of appendix III, contains sufficient references and identification to make it clear where the extract comes from and the part of the official records to which it is related.

Distinguished colleagues, please allow me to draw to your attention to appendix I, which is currently virtual. All your remarks can now be considered. Let us proceed in this way. First appendix I, then appendix II and then appendix III.

The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic has requested the floor.

Ms. Mohammad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would just like to emphasize our earlier concern about the annex to the report containing the list of documents and ask that you provide us with this annex before the report is adopted.

The President: Thank you very much, representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, for your questions. With your permission, distinguished colleagues, I will give the floor to the head of the substantive secretariat.

Ms. Day (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Thank you, Mr. President. The normal practice of the Conference on Disarmament for the past decade has been to accept requests for documents and working papers to be made official documents of the Conference up to close of business of the session. Any document submitted thereafter would be included in the report of the next session. So, we can quickly try to produce a draft annex with the documents or requests received so far for circulation as official documents of the Conference. But I am obliged to continue to accept any such requests at least until the adoption of the report, if that is the instruction I am given by the Conference and by the President; or otherwise, until the end of the session. So we can provide what we have up to yesterday, noting that we received a request today at 1.15 p.m., if I am not mistaken, and taking note of the requests that have been mentioned in this official plenary meeting. I have just been informed that we have also received two requests in writing today: one from the delegation of the Russian Federation and one from the delegation of Sweden; plus two more in the form of oral requests made during this official plenary meeting.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. Allow me to explain that the list of documents that are currently fully available, with assigned numbers, is reflected in the circulated draft. The secretariat has already received two documents today: one from the Russian Federation and one from the delegation of Sweden. They have not been assigned a number because it was not physically possible to do so. During today's meeting, at least two delegations have signalled their intention to submit statements they have made to the secretariat. Realistically, this will not have been done before 6 p.m. today. That is the current situation.

I give the floor to the delegation of Cuba.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I do not wish to take the floor excessively, or to appear impertinent, but it is only logical that we should be able to understand any United Nations document. Based on the explanation that you have given us, which is satisfactory and clears up some of my queries, I think that we should amend paragraph 4 so that it refers to appendix I of the report and paragraph 11 so that it refers to appendix II. Then, in paragraph 25, we can add the numeral III after the word "appendix", since we have more than one appendix and the others are numbered. Perhaps this is a purely technical matter for the secretariat, but for my delegation, the detail is quite important because I do not want appendices II and III – which, as you have pointed out, are a controversial part of this report – to be lost among the many documents that all delegations circulate each year. I should add that Cuba does not have any problem with this circulation of documents, which, as the Secretary explained, is the practice of this body. So, my specific proposal, if there is no opposition in the room, would be to amend the references to the appendices in paragraphs 4, 11 and 25, to read "appendix I", "appendix II" and "appendix III", respectively, and to make similar amendments in the appendices themselves.

My second request, for which I am grateful for your support, would be to give titles to the current appendices II and III. In submitting this proposal for the consideration of the Conference, I do not mean to cause problems. On the contrary, I simply wish to help make this report as coherent as possible. The titles need not be lengthy; I would settle for something as basic as "Presidency 2020", for example, in what will be appendix I, so that the reader

knows what it is about. The same goes for appendix III, which I think should at least say “Relevant Part CD/PV.1523”, if the interested parties agree. This is because without a title, readers who did not attend this meeting – and I am thinking of my students at the diplomatic academy in Cuba – will wonder who exactly is the President mentioned at the beginning of the appendix, and what document the text is taken from. It would be helpful to include something like a cross reference at the beginning of the appendix which allows the reader to go to the document that is being discussed.

Mr. President, all this is on the understanding that there is a consensus and not to create any kind of difficulty for you.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. We really value these clarifications. I think the adjustments can easily be made. We will work on them with the secretariat, if there are no conceptual objections from our distinguished colleagues in the Chamber. The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic has the floor.

Ms. Mohammad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would just like to clarify that in 2018 one of the delegations submitted a document at the last minute and we were not able to respond to it. We are concerned that the same thing will happen again this year, so we requested that this annex be provided to us before the report is adopted.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. Distinguished Ambassador of Germany, you have the floor.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. We will follow your advice on how to handle the adoption of the annexes. Secondly, I just wanted to make sure that my request that the statement I made should also be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament is not lost. I was not entirely certain as to whether you included Germany among the countries who had made a request.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the delegation of Germany. As far as I know, you are on the list. I do not know right now whether you have submitted your statement to the secretariat. However, we will find out and everything will definitely be properly reflected.

The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the floor.

Ms. Andarcia Rodríguez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your efforts to facilitate our work. My delegation is convinced that, without your experience and patience, it would have been impossible to make such sustained progress on the report today.

I would also like to take this opportunity to support the request of the Cuban delegation. Including the names of the Presidents in appendix II, for example, would add clarity and improve the quality of institutional memory, as the Cuban representative has argued. An introductory heading, particularly in appendix II, would also contribute to that purpose. My delegation considers that these additions do not affect the substance of the agreements that have been reached so far and would improve the form of the document. We also support the proposal by Cuba to number the appendices in order of appearance so as to make the document more coherent.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. I think that changing the numbering of the appendices is a matter of reflecting reality. The first one mentioned, in paragraph 4, if we agree, will be number I. The appendix mentioned in paragraph 11 will be number II and, accordingly, the one mentioned in paragraph 25 will be number III.

Do we have a consensus in the Chamber on recording the dates or the names of the specific persons who represented their countries during the presidencies in what is currently appendix II? Of course, at the moment, this is a continuation of the discussions on paragraphs 4 and 5 taken together, which we have not yet approved.

The delegation of the United States of America has the floor.

Ms. McKernan (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. The United States delegation would like to request a recess of 15 minutes, if possible.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the delegation of the United States of America for the proposal. The delegation of Cuba has the floor.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation has no objection to a 15-minute recess. I would just like to make a suggestion which might be useful to my Syrian colleague, so that we can move forward on this point. Every day one learns something new in the Conference on Disarmament, and her statement created some concern in the Cuban delegation. The secretariat has the list of documents that are pending as of this moment. I understand that the Syrian representative's concern is that some new document will be submitted at the last minute without ever having been discussed in a plenary meeting of the Conference. If that is the case, then perhaps the report we have in front of us contains references to all documents except the latest ones. Mr. President, perhaps you could mention what those latest documents would be, and this might form the basis for an agreement that these would be the last documents to be included in the report. I do not know if that would be procedurally possible or if it would help our colleague from Syria, but I perfectly understand her concern and I think we could attempt to resolve the issue today in order to adopt this report. It is just a suggestion.

The President: Thank you very much to the representative of Cuba, once again, for this question. I believe we need more clarification from the secretariat on the application of the rules of procedure on this matter, not only about the practice of previous years, but on the very facts of the situation. I therefore give the floor to Ms. Day.

Ms. Day (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Thank you, Ambassador and thanks to the distinguished delegate of Cuba. The rules of procedure are silent on the matter, so I have to refer to the previous practice of my predecessors and the reports adopted. As of today, we have the list of documents that you see in the body of the report. In addition, we have a request from the delegation of the Russian Federation for the document entitled "Statement of the Russian Federation concerning a commentary by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine dated 12 August 2020", received today at 1.20 p.m., to be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament. Since then, we have received in writing a request that the statement delivered by the distinguished delegate of Sweden be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament. We have received similar requests orally, from Germany and, if I am not mistaken, from the delegation of France. So this is where we stand as of this moment. But any other delegation may submit a request for a document to be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament up until the adoption of the report; or, as has been the practice for the last decade, until close of business, which means by 6 p.m. on Friday, 18 September 2020.

This matter is not regulated in any manner under the rules of procedure. I stand ready, with the rest of the Conference on Disarmament secretariat, to be guided by your decision-making on the matter.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. The delegation of Cuba has the floor.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary. I do not think that I am repeating myself when I say that what she has explained to us is very helpful. The rules of procedure certainly do not grant the secretariat that kind of prerogative, whereas we, the member States, do have a prerogative, which is to conclude the report here and now. In my view, this is not a matter of restricting the right of any State to submit further documents, but of adopting the report here today. That is to say, if all the States members of the Conference on Disarmament adopt the report now, my understanding is that any further documents that they submit will be annexed or discussed in the next report and not in this one. As member States, we have the prerogative to adopt the report, so that it is closed, without that placing any restriction on our right to submit further documents. However, the secretariat should not reflect such documents in the report, since I do not believe that the secretariat can change a report once it has been adopted by the States parties. That might be termed "pettifogging", in other words, seeing if we can resolve the issue by bending the rules. Thank you, Mr. President, and I apologize once again for intervening.

The President: The representative of the United Kingdom has the floor.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President. Tonight, I welcome the fact that we are having a discussion on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference.

Can I just draw the delegations' attention to rule 45, which talks about the content of the report of the Conference? Rule 45 sets out what the report needs to contain. Subparagraph (f) talks about working papers and proposals submitted during the year. We could interpret the year as meaning the Conference on Disarmament session, which we have agreed finishes at 6 p.m. on Friday, or we could talk about the calendar year. But I do not see any interpretation that it should mean the last plenary meeting of the year during which the report happens to be adopted. Furthermore, as my distinguished colleague from Cuba has said, it is the right of any State to submit documents to the secretariat to be circulated as official documents of the Conference. So I would be hesitant in overturning the practice of so many years at this late stage of our session without due reflection. I hope that we would take it on trust that the secretariat will circulate the documents and reflect those documents in due form in the report, as they have done for so many years. And whether delegates have had the chance to read them or not is immaterial to the fact that they have been circulated, which is what the rules of procedures say should be reflected in the report. Of course, if delegations then wish to submit their own documents in reply to those, then they are free to do so. And if that happens to run into the next session, then they will be reflected in next year's report. So, I do not think that we have a problem here.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, representative of the United Kingdom. The representative of the Netherlands has the floor.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President. I do not mind if we have a discussion on the rules of procedure or alter them. But I subscribe to the vision presented by the secretariat, which has been the practice so far. And we should be careful about opening up such debates, because it would mean having a right to inspect documents being submitted by other delegations, which is not the case at all. So I am open to having this discussion, but I would not be in favour of the proposal by Cuba to change these rules of procedure.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you to the representative of the Netherlands. The delegation of Cuba has the floor.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you to my colleague from the United Kingdom. We do not wish to change the rules of procedure or open a discussion on the rules of procedure – on the contrary. It may be because I am a lawyer that I am venturing into this area as a result of the concern raised by Syria. My understanding is that is not clear whether last year's report was adopted by the Conference or left open for New York – that was not at all clear in the negotiations. But the fact is that we are now ready to adopt the report. I think that the relevant rule here is not rule 45 but rule 46, which says "The Conference shall adopt the annual report at the end of its session". That sentence is clear enough. When the Conference adopts the report, no one can change it, least of all the secretariat. I do not know if what happened previously is the Conference's practice, if the report being open made it difficult for the secretariat to know exactly when we adopted it, or if this was done in the First Committee, because it was never adopted in the Conference. I put this down fully to the ambiguity we had last year, but the truth is that the rules of procedure are very clear. The report of the Conference is adopted at the end of its session in a plenary meeting such as this one, in all six languages. Once we adopt this report, no one, neither the secretariat nor the member States, can change it. I believe that it is not a question of changing the rules of procedure but of applying them correctly, and not to the benefit of some and the detriment of others.

The President: Thank you very much. I will give the floor first to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, and we will then have a 10-minute break for the Cuban delegation to work with my colleagues, with the secretariat and with all the interested parties on titles for the appendix.

Ms. Mohammad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation is merely calling for a commitment to transparency and respect for the right of States to have access to documents before they are included in the report.

The President: Thank you very much. Just for clarification, what does that mean for the recess discussion that we are about to have? Will you oppose the gavelling of appendix 1 until you see it in writing? What guarantees can you offer to the States that have spoken in favour of their right to submit the document by the end of the session, as provided for in the rules of procedure? Are you going to present any proposal for the decision of the Conference on Disarmament on this matter in order to achieve a consensus in the room?

Ms. Mohammad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation will make a proposal on this matter.

The President: Thank you. I give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): I have to react to the interpretation given by Cuba, which, for the record, I disagree with because I do not want any sovereign right of the countries submitting documents to be limited, as would be the case with the interpretation Cuba gave. I would like to retain the practice that we have, without any further interpretation of the rules of procedure. So I disagree, and there is no consensus on this interpretation.

The President: Thank you. I give the floor to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and then we will have a break.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. I think that, if we continue with this debate, it will become another controversial issue. But, for the sake of clarity, as I understand it, the Cuban proposal is not going to limit the sovereign right of any delegation. They are not going to propose something against the will and the sovereign right of any member State. But the fact is that, when we adopt a report with its annexes, we agree upon the content of that report – the whole body of that report, including the annex. Of course, each member State has a sovereign right to submit a document and want the secretariat to circulate it as an official document. But what if that document needs to be answered by another member State? I think rule 46 is quite clear that no further documents should be considered after the adoption of the report. Hence, any documents which are submitted after the adoption of the report of that year should be reflected in the next year's session. That is my understanding.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you to the Islamic Republic of Iran. I see two more requests for the floor. Please be very brief. I give the floor to the representative of Brazil, to be followed by the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dalcero (Brazil): Thank you, Mr. President. I will make a proposal. One solution to this dilemma could be to convene a one-hour meeting for 5 p.m. on Friday; the secretariat should prepare all the documents that have been submitted by that time, and we can wait to see if any delegation will present any other document. That way, at 6 p.m. on the last day of the Conference, we will be able to close the session. It is, as I said, a practical solution to help us to overcome this dilemma, and I hope that every delegation here will feel comfortable with it. For the record, Mr. President, I believe that the discussion on the working methods of the Conference, which Brazil supports, includes the work of the secretariat and administrative issues such as this.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the delegation of Brazil. I do not think you are being naive in putting forward this proposal. As far as I see it, it is the only way out of this discussion. The representative of the United Kingdom has the floor.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President. I was merely going to point out that rule 45 also says that the report should contain the verbatim records of all of our plenaries. And by definition, you cannot have the verbatim record of the plenary in which a report has been adopted until after the report has been adopted and the plenary session has been gavelled. I think we can string these things out to absurdities if we really want to. But I think the proposal just made by the distinguished representative of Brazil is characteristically wise.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. We will take a five-minute break.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): So, distinguished colleagues, we have received the reaction from the United States delegation with regard to the paragraphs 4 and 5, and we can now see on the screen the addition that the United States delegation is suggesting. If I understand correctly, they are unable to accept paragraph 5, while they are happy with paragraph 4 in the written version. The floor is open for comments. We have five minutes left in the formal setting. The delegation of Cuba has the floor.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Cuba would like to place on record that it cannot accept the last-minute proposal made by the United States, which takes us back to the discussion we had yesterday on paragraph 46. I say

this clearly and directly: Cuba does not accept the proposal of the United States to include language about the fact that no report sets a precedent for future work. That is obvious, because two years ago they altered what was the precedent at that time, and it is obvious that all other countries have the same right. The language that they are proposing is not helpful and cannot go in this paragraph. I believe that this proposal is not constructive. I am grateful that they have understood what we have put forward, but Cuba does not accept the proposed language, least of all in that place. Mr. President, excuse me for being direct, but I do not want to cause you to waste your time.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, representative of Cuba. The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the floor.

Ms. Andarcia Rodríguez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to be very brief. In line with the comments of the Cuban delegation, my country's view is that this proposal, presented just now at 6 p.m. on what was supposed to be the last day of our session, simply highlights the root of our concern regarding the drafting of paragraph 4. It is quite inconvenient for this proposal to be presented at this time, and indeed we agree with the Cuban delegation that it does not help us resolve the problem before us.

The President: Thank you. We have just two minutes left. The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran has the floor.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. I am trying to find a way to see this proposal in a positive and constructive light, but unfortunately I am not able to do so. So we are definitely not in a position to support this proposal and, in line with the previous speakers, we are of the view that it is not constructive. We support the position of the Cuban and Venezuelan delegations.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you. Distinguished colleagues, clearly there is no consensus in the room on the proposal made by the delegation of the United States of America. Given that we are running out of time for our formal meeting, I would like to announce that we have the possibility of continuing our work in a formal meeting, but in-person with no hybrid option, on Friday between 3 and 6 p.m., which I plan to do.

I thank you all for your constructive work. I will try and inform you as soon as possible, both directly through our Mission and with the help of the secretariat, about the possibilities for informal consultations to continue our work. We have tried to define the appearance of the appendices and give them headings and titles so they look like proper appendices to the official Conference document. I hope that this approach will be acceptable to those delegations that voiced justified criticism of the formatting of these texts, although the appropriate technical formatting was expected.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.