

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and ninety-eighth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 25 January 2022, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Li Song(China)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I call to order the 1598th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Distinguished delegates, Secretary-General Valovaya, I would like to begin by wishing you all a happy New Year. Before we begin our work today, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments since the Conference adjourned in 2021. I will introduce the new ambassadors when they arrive, and we will welcome them together. I would also like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of my Government and the Conference on Disarmament, our support for the ambassadors in their new assignments and our commitment to cooperate with them.

I propose to conduct our meeting this morning as follows. First, we will adopt the draft agenda of the Conference for 2022. Second, in accordance with our usual practice, we shall consider applications for participation by non-member States in the work of the Conference in 2022. I will give you further information on this work in a moment. Third, the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, will make a statement. This will be followed by my own statement. I will then give the floor to those delegations wishing to continue with their statements.

I had intended to hold another plenary meeting this afternoon to allow delegates who have not had time to speak this morning to continue to share their views. However, I have been informed that a number of member States need to attend informal consultations this afternoon regarding another important multilateral meeting on arms control and non-proliferation. Therefore, no plenary session will be scheduled for this afternoon. We will have our next plenary meeting on Thursday 27 January at 10 a.m. If there are colleagues who do not have time to speak today, we will ask them to take the floor at the plenary meeting on Thursday.

I would now like to invite you to consider the draft agenda for the 2022 session of the Conference, contained in document CD/WP.637. As has been the practice in the past, I propose to attach to the agenda a presidential statement which would read as follows:

“With regard to the adoption of the agenda, I would like to make the following statement as President of the Conference: it is my understanding that if there is consensus in the Conference on dealing with any issues, all such issues can be handled within this agenda. The Conference will also take into account rules 27 and 30 of the rules of procedure.”

Does any delegation wish to take the floor on the draft agenda contained in document CD/WP.637? I do not see any delegation asking for the floor. May I take it that the Conference wishes to adopt the draft agenda as contained in document CD/WP.637, together with the statement that I have just read out?

It was so decided.

The next matter is that of requests for participation in the work of the Conference in 2022 by non-member States, as contained in document CD/WP.638, which was sent by the secretariat in an email at 3 p.m. yesterday, in order to give delegations 24 hours to consider it. In the meantime, I would like to continue to keep in touch with member States on this issue. I will ask the Conference to consider the requests contained in document CD/WP.638 on Thursday, 27 January, at 10 a.m. I thank you all for your cooperation on this issue.

Distinguished colleagues, I now give the floor to Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference.

Ms. Valovaya (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, it is a pleasure to address you at the opening of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament. Let me begin by wishing all of you a happy new year. I am pleased that today, despite the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Conference is able to begin its session in person. I am sure you will agree that there is no real substitute for in-person discussions, particularly on sensitive and critically important topics pertaining to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Last year, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the member States of the Conference demonstrated their commitment to bringing forward the work of the Conference and engaged earnestly on the draft decisions on the organization of the Conference's work. When these decisions were not agreed on, you utilized thematic plenaries as an opportunity for discussions on the Conference's agenda items. It is my sincere hope that, this year, Conference members will again engage in this effort, which will be spearheaded by this year's six Presidents.

On this, I am very pleased to see that the spirit of collaboration among the group of the current session's six Presidents, in addition to the last President of the previous session and the first President of the next session – what you call the “P6 plus 2” mechanism – that characterized the last several sessions of the Conference has continued. That mechanism is important in ensuring continuity not only between Presidents but also between the annual sessions of the Conference and its work.

Ladies and gentlemen, for years we have witnessed rising global tensions among key players, growing distrust, armed competition, the politicization of disarmament forums and an overall erosion of the disarmament architecture.

The current continued geopolitical tensions make multilateralism and diplomacy all the more important. The recent joint statement by the five nuclear-weapon States designated as such under the Non-Proliferation Treaty that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought gives us hope for a return to cooperation and synergies in disarmament and non-proliferation diplomacy. We are looking forward to further positive signs.

In fact, the complex security challenges in today's world leave no alternative to multilateralism. As the United Nations Secretary-General noted in his recent report *Our Common Agenda*, we need collective efforts and a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system to respond to the security threats that are facing us.

All Conference on Disarmament member States bear equal responsibility to begin rebuilding trust and confidence in this august body. I urge all Conference members to engage in good faith in constructive dialogue that will lead the Conference forward in the consideration of its core agenda items. Political will on the part of all members is fundamental to agreement on a programme of work and eventual negotiations on disarmament instruments, which remain the *raison d'être* of this Conference.

I must also stress again the importance of inclusivity in multilateralism. It is important to the credibility of this body and to its deliberations that all States that wish to be a part of its proceedings be given a seat at the table as observers.

Despite the many uncertainties, 2021 saw numerous successes in the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control regime, such as the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the review conferences of the parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Looking ahead, this year we will see the review conferences of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and of the parties to the Biological Weapons Convention. It is my hope that Conference on Disarmament members will take advantage of the opportunity that the Conference provides as a venue to rebuild a constructive atmosphere and to hold relevant discussions ahead of these important milestones.

Together with my secretariat, I stand ready to support all initiatives to bring the work of the Conference forward. I wish you success in your work this year.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Valovaya for her statement. Allow me now to speak in my capacity as President of the Conference and Chinese Ambassador for Disarmament Affairs. I have the honour to begin by reading out a letter from Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, addressed to the first plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva in 2022:

As the Conference on Disarmament begins its 2022 session, I wish to extend my congratulations and best wishes on the opening of this plenary.

The world today is experiencing the combined impacts of major changes and a pandemic, both unseen in a century. The international relations and global strategic-security situations are undergoing complex and profound adjustments. Traditional security threats are intertwined with emerging security challenges, and the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation system stands at a critical crossroads.

Facing the new circumstances and challenges, the international community needs to vigorously advocate the common human values of peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, commit to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable global security and resolutely uphold the authority and status of the United Nations. It should steadily advance the reform of the global security governance system and the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes and jointly build a community with a shared future for mankind that enjoys lasting peace and universal security.

As the sole multilateral forum for negotiating disarmament, the Conference has achieved important outcomes including the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention, making important historical contributions to global peace and security. In the new historical era, the status and role of the Conference as an important platform for global security governance have become even more prominent and the international community has high expectations of its work. China calls on all member States of the Conference to hold in-depth discussions of the traditional agenda items and emerging challenges, grounded on the principles of mutual respect and consensus, and to strive to revitalize the Conference, seek appropriate solutions on the basis of undiminished security for all countries and work to achieve universal, sustainable and common security.

China unswervingly follows the path of peaceful development and is committed to being a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development and a defender of the international order. As the holder of the first rotating presidency of the Conference in 2022, China will actively fulfil its duties, play a constructive role, and enhance coordination with the other Presidents and member States to contribute its share to revitalizing the Conference.

The foregoing was the full text of the letter of State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Distinguished colleagues, the letter from State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi fully reflects my country's confidence in and support for the Conference on Disarmament. As the first President of the Conference this year, I will work closely with the other Presidents and actively strive to advance the work of the Conference. I would like to share three thoughts with you here.

First, the work of our Conference should fully reflect the reality of the international security situation at all levels. The Conference should move with the times and innovate in its work, while remaining faithful to the historic mandate entrusted to it at the tenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Over the past four decades, the international situation has undergone a series of major changes of profound significance, many of which have a close bearing on the work of our Conference. Facing such new realities, Conference members must also keep pace with the changing times and approach our work from a higher and broader strategic perspective, so that what we are doing under traditional agenda items can better match the new realities and outlook in the international security domain.

At the same time, the Conference is also assuming new tasks that the times have placed on its shoulders. In the face of the fresh problems and challenges in the field of international security that have arisen with the advent of new and emerging technologies, member delegations need to explore preventive programmes and measures in arms-control diplomacy. In this regard, the present agenda of the Conference has ample room for such forward-looking, open-ended and innovative undertakings.

As President, I actively encourage member States to make full use of our plenary meetings as platforms to conduct in-depth exchanges and discussions on the aforementioned issues, pooling our wisdom and absorbing all useful ideas, and jointly identifying and promoting approaches to common understanding and consensus which truly meet the general security interests of all member States.

Second, the work of the Conference should be reset so that it is on a sound and professional footing. The Conference is not an arena for big power competition and confrontation, or a tool for big powers to bully smaller ones; rather, it is the major platform for pursuing genuine multilateralism, advancing global security governance and promoting common security. All member States of the Conference, large or small, are equals and should respect each other. The legitimate security concerns and interests of each and every State should be fully taken into account and be reasonably accommodated. The principle of undiminished security for all must be made to work in practice.

In recent years, the Conference on Disarmament has been severely obstructed and buffeted by politicization, which has seriously eroded trust and cooperation among delegations. This is one of the main causes of our current stalemate. I sincerely hope that, through everyone's joint efforts, we can depoliticize the Conference so that its work can be fully repositioned on a sound and professional basis and it can fulfil its responsibilities in a harmonious working atmosphere and with a completely new working attitude.

Third, the Conference should continue its efforts to reach a balanced and comprehensive programme of work and launch substantive work on all important agenda items. The underlying reason for the failure of the Conference to initiate any new treaty negotiations in recent years has been the growing complication of the global strategic and security situation. This is a profound manifestation of international security realities in the Conference itself, for which specific rules of procedure or working methods of the Conference cannot be blamed. In fact, it only underscores the value and significance of the principle of a balanced and comprehensive approach, since that essential principle ensures respect for the positions, security concerns and interests of all Member States. It is the principal safeguard for guiding the work of the Conference.

In 2018, the Conference successfully set up subsidiary bodies to carry out substantive work on its major agenda items. Over the past three years, at the start of each annual session, the Conference Presidents have adhered to the principle of a balanced and comprehensive approach and made unremitting efforts to achieve a programme of work. Their efforts deserve everyone's high appreciation and acknowledgment and should become the primary basis upon which we begin our work this year.

During the initial stage of this year's session, I hope that Conference members will focus on giving full expression to their views on the programme of work. I shall also undertake active bilateral consultations with each and every delegation to further sound out your views. On that basis, I shall then proceed with the other Presidents to jointly study and draft a concrete plan to be discussed and decided upon by Member States.

Every new year heralds a new beginning. The same can be said of the situation of the Conference and, indeed, of ourselves. As this new year began, the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States, namely China, the Russian Federation, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and France, issued the Joint Statement on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races. The leaders affirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought and reaffirmed that none of their nuclear weapons were targeted at each other or at any other State. They made a commitment to preserve and comply with bilateral and multilateral arms control agreements and emphasized that the five States should avoid military confrontations and prevent arms races. In his capacity as coordinator of the process being pursued by the nuclear-weapon States, known as the P5 process, the Ambassador of France will share further information on this subject with this plenary in a few minutes.

China has always actively advocated the idea that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought and played an active role in leading and encouraging the five nuclear-weapon States to take this joint action. That the leaders of the five States issued a joint statement on the nuclear-weapons issue for the first time demonstrates the political will of

those States to prevent nuclear war. Their shared advocacy of maintaining global strategic stability and reducing the risk of nuclear conflicts is also conducive to forging major-country relations that feature overall stability and balanced development. China hopes that the five nuclear-weapon States will continue to enhance strategic mutual trust and strengthen communication and cooperation, so that they can play a positive role in building a world of lasting peace and universal security.

Distinguished colleagues, the task before us is not to repeat the past, but to open the way for the future. The start of this year's Conference session also closely coincides with the beginning of a new Chinese lunar year, which will be the Year of Tiger. It will be a propitious year, since the tiger is supposed to bring good fortune and guard against evil spirits, and it symbolizes courage and strength. It is the common wish of the international community that, in the coming year, humanity will unite as one, with greater courage and strength to overcome the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, safeguard world peace and promote common development.

The upcoming Beijing Winter Olympics will also bring new vitality and hope to the world. For my part, I hope and believe that the member States of the Conference can also demonstrate a greater sense of unity and display greater courage and strength in seeking to revive and revitalize the Conference, working to safeguard world peace, security and stability and advancing the processes of multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. I and my team stand ready to make fresh attempts to that end and look forward to everyone's full support.

I now give the floor to the first speaker on the list of speakers for today, Ambassador Lundeg of Mongolia, for the Group of 21.

Mr. Lundeg (Mongolia): Mr. President, on behalf of the Group of 21, we would like to congratulate you and China for assuming the role of the first President of the 2022 session of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish you every success in your presidency and in starting our work in 2022. We look forward to working with the Presidents from all six of the member States that will take on the Conference presidency in 2022.

Cognizant of the changes in the global health situation and its impact on the Conference, the Group would like to reiterate its flexibility regarding the temporary arrangements for our meetings while underscoring the importance of full respect for the rules of procedure.

The Group reaffirms the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in those areas.

The Group of 21 would like to stress that the Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum mandated by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and emphasize the importance of preserving it by strengthening the nature, the role and the mandate of this body. The Group underscores the need for a redoubling of efforts aimed at reinforcing and revitalizing the Conference and preserving its credibility through the resumption of substantive work, including negotiations on nuclear disarmament. The Group of 21 reaffirms what it stated in its working paper on nuclear disarmament, contained in document CD/2214, and all the working papers submitted by the Group to the Conference in 2021.

The Group reiterates the urgency for the Conference to execute its mandate as set out by the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and also to adopt and implement a balanced and comprehensive programme of work on the basis of its agenda, while taking into account the security interests of all the States and dealing with, *inter alia*, the core issues, particularly nuclear disarmament, in accordance with the rules of procedure, including the rule of consensus. The Group encourages you, Mr. President, to spare no effort and to continue conducting comprehensive consultations with all delegations to the Conference on Disarmament to achieve this goal.

To conclude, Mr. President, we wish to reiterate the commitment of the Group of 21 to the work of the Conference and assure you of the Group's support for your presidency.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Mongolian Ambassador. I now give the floor to the representative of France, Mr. Wagner, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Wagner (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries North Macedonia and Albania, and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

Let me begin by congratulating you on your role as the first President of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish you good luck and much success in the work that you will undertake. We begin this year's session with high hopes of moving forward and resuming the substantive work of the Conference. We welcome your early and active engagement with the member States of the Conference and encourage you to build on the work programme proposals of previous years. Strong political will, increased confidence and flexibility are urgently required from all member States if we are to break the deadlock and get the Conference back on track.

Mr. President, in line with the vision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, reflected in his report A/75/982 to the General Assembly, entitled "Our Common Agenda", the European Union and its member States continue to support effective multilateralism and rules-based international cooperation, with the United Nations at its centre, to ensure a more secure, stable and sustainable world. It is the most viable way to address global challenges and achieve results on issues important to our citizens. The European Union will continue to do its utmost to protect the integrity of the rules-based international system, which is key to our collective security.

In this context, the European Union regrets that the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has, inevitably, been postponed once more, due to the current pandemic. Despite this further postponement, the European Union will continue to work for a positive and substantive outcome from the 2020 NPT Review Conference. The European Union unequivocally supports this Treaty as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, in accordance with its article VI, and an important element in the development of the uses of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in accordance with its article IV. The European Union recognizes the historic achievements of this seminal international treaty, negotiated under the auspices of one of the parent bodies of the Conference on Disarmament, in limiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, facilitating cooperation in the field of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and significantly reducing nuclear arsenals over the past decades. The Treaty has enduring value and its full implementation is more necessary now than ever.

Mr. President, the European Union considers the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was negotiated under the auspices of this Conference, to be of crucial importance for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Its entry into force is an absolute priority and remains a political imperative for the European Union. The European Union calls on all States that have not yet done so, in particular those listed in annex 2 of the Treaty, to sign and ratify this instrument without preconditions or further delay. It also urges all States to maintain their moratoriums on nuclear weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions and to refrain from any act that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty.

The European Union also welcomes the agreement reached between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on extending the New START for an additional five years. It attaches the highest importance to this treaty and regards it as a crucial contribution to international and European security. The reduction, under the New START, of deployed strategic nuclear arsenals, strengthened in particular by its robust verification mechanism, contributes to the implementation of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty through the overall reduction of the global stockpile of deployed nuclear weapons.

The Council of the European Union stresses the need to preserve and further advance arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes. Recalling the obligation on all nuclear-weapon States arising from article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, we underline that the two States with the largest arsenals hold a special responsibility in the area of nuclear

disarmament and arms control. The European Union encourages them to further reduce their arsenals, including strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons, both deployed and non-deployed, and to continue discussions on confidence-building, transparency, risk reduction and verification activities, thus laying the foundation for future arms control and reporting agreements. We call on China to actively contribute to these processes.

The European Union also welcomes the continuation of dialogue on strategic stability between the United States and the Russian Federation. We encourage both countries to use diplomacy and dialogue to make progress on the complex security issues on the table, including the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and arms control, and to consult with European Union member States when discussing issues that affect their security. The European Union calls on the Russian Federation to take concrete steps to de-escalate tensions and to create a climate conducive to much needed progress on these issues.

Mr. President, in the current context of insecurity, marked by rising tensions and serious proliferation crises and challenges, greater efforts must be made in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The Conference on Disarmament remains the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body in the world and a key component of the disarmament machinery. It is of the utmost importance to the European Union that it remains relevant and continues to function effectively. The Conference on Disarmament must urgently fulfil its crucial function of negotiating multilateral disarmament treaties, and it could also develop other instruments and norms such as guidelines and codes of conduct.

We are concerned that the Conference remains deadlocked and that it has repeatedly been unable to agree on a programme of work and other procedural matters. The resumption of negotiations on disarmament, which is long overdue, is a central objective for the European Union in this forum. While the European Union and its member States are ready to initiate substantive work on all key issues, its long-standing priority in the Conference is to immediately start negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for the manufacture of weapons and other nuclear explosive devices and we support the commencement of such negotiations on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. We call on all States to help facilitate the long-awaited negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We could advance our understanding by building on the substantial progress made in recent years by the Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices and the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group in terms of the definitions, scope, verification mechanism, and legal and institutional framework that such a treaty might encompass.

In the meantime, we call on all States possessing nuclear weapons that have not yet done so to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on their production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We commend France for declaring a moratorium and dismantling or converting such facilities and we call on other States to do the same.

Mr. President, non-member States of the Conference on Disarmament continue to show interest in the work of the Conference. It is regrettable that not all Member States of the United Nations who had asked to participate in the work of the Conference were invited to do so last year. This decision goes against the basic principle of multilateralism and harms our collective endeavours. The European Union supports the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament, which currently has only 65 members. Since the last expansion in 2002, 28 countries, including 12 European Union member States, have been waiting to become Conference members. It is high time to make progress on this issue. According to the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament, the membership of the Conference should be reviewed at regular intervals. In this spirit, we reiterate our proposal that a special coordinator be appointed to conduct substantive consultations and develop possible scenarios for the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament, for consideration by Conference members.

Mr. President, the European Union remains gravely concerned about the persistent proliferation crises and challenges that continue to threaten international security. In this spirit, the European Union reaffirms its strong commitment to and continued support for the

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The Plan is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture that was unanimously endorsed by the United Nations Security Council in its resolution 2231 (2015). The European Union expresses its grave concern about the continued actions of Iran, which are inconsistent with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and have serious, if not irreversible, consequences in terms of proliferation. It urges Iran to reverse these actions without further delay, including by implementing all transparency measures. The European Union supports an early conclusion of the intense diplomatic efforts currently under way in the Joint Commission for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and through contacts of the High Representative of the European Union, as coordinator of the Joint Commission, with all relevant partners on the modalities to ensure full and effective implementation of the nuclear agreement.

We also remain gravely concerned about the ballistic missile activities of Iran and call on it to refrain from any activity inconsistent with Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) and not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using the technology behind such missiles. We urge Iran not to transfer any missiles or missile components or missile technology to non-State actors, in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The European Union expresses its deep concern about the continuation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its illegal weapons programmes. It condemns the measures taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to strengthen its nuclear and missile capabilities, including the recent repeated launches of new types of missiles, and the resumption of illegal activities at certain nuclear facilities. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from nuclear testing and missile launches and call upon it to take concrete steps to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, as called for in multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to engage in serious discussions with all parties concerned in order to lay the foundation for lasting peace and security, and to take steps to pursue the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must return to compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and bring the Additional Protocol into force. We also urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Mr. President, in conclusion, we would like to stress that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is an important horizontal priority for the European Union. We fully support and endorse the equal participation of women and men in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, and encourage the participation of women in the Conference on Disarmament. The participation of women in this work, and more broadly in the field of international security, is important to our search for global solutions. We regret that, despite broad support, the Conference on Disarmament was unable to reach consensus on a technical update to its rules of procedure to address gender equality at its 2021 session and we hope that the 2022 session will make progress on this issue. In line with its youth strategy, the European Union is also active in promoting the meaningful and inclusive participation of young people in disarmament and non-proliferation discussions; we will continue to work with civil society, universities and think tanks to encourage youth participation in the Conference on Disarmament.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I would now like to ask Ambassador Yann Hwang of France to speak in his capacity as Coordinator of the process being pursued by the nuclear-weapon States, known as the P5 process.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success. The Chinese presidency can count on the full support of France.

Mr. President, I have the honour of delivering a statement as coordinator of the process being pursued by the nuclear-weapon States, known as the P5 process, which brings together the five nuclear-weapon states under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) – the People's Republic of China, the United States of America, the United Kingdom,

the Russian Federation and my own country, France – to inform the member States of the Conference on Disarmament on the status of work in the process.

France has had the honour of coordinating this process over the past eighteen months, in preparation for the Tenth NPT Review Conference. Our five countries reaffirm their continued support for the Treaty through its three pillars and its universalization. We are determined to contribute to the success of this important milestone and reaffirm the authority and primacy of the Treaty as the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime and an essential component of our international security architecture for more than fifty years now.

In this regard, we regret the further postponement of the Review Conference due to the international health situation and hope that it can be held as soon as possible and under the best conditions. We remain committed to continuing our efforts in the lead-up to this event and to maintaining the positive momentum of the past few weeks. On 2 and 3 December, 2021, France hosted the P5 Conference in Paris, which provided an opportunity for in-depth discussions on issues related to the three pillars, and to continue the work outlined in the P5 road map. Some joint products for the Review Conference have been finalized and are now available online at the website of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs: the working paper on strategic risk reduction, the statement on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the second edition of the glossary of nuclear terms. The Paris Conference also provided us with an opportunity for a fruitful dialogue with the President-designate and the NPT Bureau, as well as with representatives of non-nuclear-weapon States and civil society. Finally, the Paris Conference allowed the adoption of a joint communiqué for the first time in many years.

Mr. President, on 3 January 2022, the heads of State and Government of our five countries issued a joint statement on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races, which I would like to read to the Conference on Disarmament. I quote:

The People's Republic of China, the French Republic, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America consider the avoidance of war between nuclear-weapon States and the reduction of strategic risks as our foremost responsibilities. We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. As nuclear use would have far-reaching consequences, we also affirm that nuclear weapons – for as long as they continue to exist – should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war. We believe strongly that the further spread of such weapons must be prevented.

We reaffirm the importance of addressing nuclear threats and emphasize the importance of preserving and complying with our bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control agreements and commitments. We remain committed to our Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations, including our article VI obligation “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control”.

We each intend to maintain and further strengthen our national measures to prevent unauthorized or unintended use of nuclear weapons. We reiterate the validity of our previous statements on de-targeting, reaffirming that none of our nuclear weapons are targeted at each other or at any other State.

We underline our desire to work with all states to create a security environment more conducive to progress on disarmament with the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all. We intend to continue seeking bilateral and multilateral diplomatic approaches to avoid military confrontations, strengthen stability and predictability, increase mutual understanding and confidence, and prevent an arms race that would benefit none and endanger all. We are resolved to pursue constructive dialogue with mutual respect and acknowledgment of each other's security interests and concerns.

This joint statement will be officially circulated as a working paper of the Conference on Disarmament.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement. I also thank the Ambassador of France and other colleagues for their words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Zniber of Morocco.

Mr. Zniber (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to warmly congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at the opening of this year's session and assure you of our full cooperation during your term of office.

I would like to begin by asking, on behalf of my delegation, whether the Conference on Disarmament remains for all of us an essential and indispensable body for achieving the most ardent wishes of the international community, namely, to fight against the accumulation of weapons, in order to strengthen peace and security in the world? As far as we are concerned, the answer, more than ever, is yes, especially since the international geopolitical context remains uncertain and volatile, as Ms. Valovaya, our Secretary-General, underlined so well this morning.

This context is characterized by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has contributed to the increasing numbers and worsening of humanitarian crises in many regions. As we have seen, these humanitarian crises are already fostered by the climate of instability created by current conflicts that constitute threats to international peace and security. Tensions are becoming inflamed more than ever, as we have seen since the beginning of this year.

The international security landscape, as it stands today, should require us to engage in a constructive and rigorous dialogue to overcome our differences. By engaging in a continuous exchange, let us put aside the political calculations that prevent us from advancing on the substance of the themes included in the work programme that we wish to adopt again this year as a matter of urgency. If the Conference on Disarmament does succeed in overcoming these blockages, which is what we have been working on for many years, it could help to outline the agreements that we could draw up, in the short and medium term, to reduce tensions and confront the enormous challenges that lie ahead, due in particular to the dual factors of advanced technology and the supposed or real perceptions of security threats.

The results achieved by the Conference on Disarmament with the ban on nuclear tests, even if not yet formally confirmed, and the ban on chemical weapons, are a reminder that the Conference on Disarmament can and must be effective. That is why, Mr. President, it is essential that we manage this year to adopt a balanced programme of work that is adapted to the need to negotiate openly and transparently on the essential issues of nuclear disarmament, fissile materials, the protection of outer space, the arms race and any other issue that we deem appropriate.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed a notable slowdown in all the major meetings to be held outside of the Conference on Disarmament over the past two years, and primarily the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Treaty, despite its imperfections, is one of the most advanced binding multilateral legal instruments. Its universal nature, its comprehensiveness and its uniqueness make it the only guarantee we have that the world will rid itself of the threat, and the continued existence, of nuclear weapons. Now, more than ever, it is time to move towards the elimination of nuclear weapons in line with the commitments made in adopting the Treaty and to establish a clear programme for achieving that goal by a clear, fixed date. The Non-Proliferation Treaty is central to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and we reaffirm here, Mr. President, our commitment to the effective implementation of its three pillars.

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate my delegation's unwavering commitment to expanding the membership of our august body to include new members who are actively engaged in the debates related to our themes. In anticipation of the achievement of this objective, we strongly encourage everyone, next Thursday, to agree to the requests for observer participation, as those observers contribute and will continue to contribute to the

enrichment and diversification of our discussions. It is in the interest of the global multilateral disarmament architecture to strengthen our forum and its activities by reviving its original mandate and negotiating binding multilateral treaties.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of Morocco for his words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to the newly-appointed representative of Slovakia, Ambassador Matulay, and I would also like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome him, on behalf of the Member States of the Conference, to our Conference on Disarmament family.

Mr. Matulay (Slovakia): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on assuming the first presidency of the 2022 session of the Conference on Disarmament. You can count on the full support of my delegation in discharging your responsibilities and steering this very important body. I would also like to thank you for the warm welcome you gave me. I look forward to cooperating closely with you and stand ready to seek solutions to move the Conference forward.

Mr. President, Slovakia aligns itself with the statement delivered by France on behalf of the European Union. Let me make some additional remarks from a national perspective.

The international security environment has been characterized by continued tensions and mistrust, particularly in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. We are witnessing continued military build-ups, the development of new types of weapons and means of delivery, the circumventing of existing norms and rules and a lack of transparency and confidence. Domains like the cyberdomain and outer space are being used as means of competition rather than cooperation.

New and emerging technologies pose additional challenges to international security. Renewed efforts are necessary to improve international security. We therefore highly value endeavours and measures aimed at increasing stability, predictability, trust and confidence. In this context, we welcome the extension of the New START, the continuation of the strategic stability dialogue and the restatement of the formula proposed in the declaration made after the 1986 Reykjavik Summit between President Reagan of the United States and President Gorbachev of the Russian Federation.

We are also encouraged by and welcome the development and the work undertaken as part of the process, known as the P5 process, being pursued by the five nuclear-weapon States designated as such under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including the adoption of the joint communiqué from the conference of the five States in Paris in December 2021 and their joint statement of 3 January 2022 on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races. We hope that these developments will also bring new energy into the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Slovakia continues to attach great value to the Conference as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, which has an indispensable role in the disarmament machinery and the promotion of international peace and security. Progress in the Conference is long awaited and necessary, and whether we can fulfil its mandate and bring about tangible results under its agenda items will depend on the States members of the Conference and their flexibility and political will.

Slovakia supports a progressive, step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament which encompasses mutually reinforcing legal measures and practical instruments and, at the same time, takes into account the prevailing security environment.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. It is necessary to further strengthen the Treaty and enhance implementation of commitments undertaken during the previous review conferences and, in this context, it is regrettable that the tenth NPT Review Conference has had to be postponed once again. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that the time available for the States parties to the Treaty should be utilized to prepare thoroughly for the Review Conference to ensure the best possible outcome.

Another important building block of nuclear disarmament is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Slovakia is a staunch supporter of this Treaty, which was

negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. We call on all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty without preconditions or further delay. We also stress the importance of respecting moratoriums on nuclear test explosions and see the great importance of the robust monitoring and verification system provided for by the Treaty.

We acknowledge the value of multilateral cooperation and various initiatives in advancing nuclear disarmament verification, which has an indispensable role in assuring compliance in the process of achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons. Moreover, taking into account the current security environment, we believe it is also important that States possessing nuclear weapons take action to address and reduce strategic and nuclear risk and implement practical measures to that end.

The long-standing priority of Slovakia in the Conference on Disarmament is the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in accordance with document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. We believe that the time is ripe for negotiations on this matter in the Conference. The outstanding work on this issue done by the Group of Governmental Experts and the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group can serve the Conference well in this regard. Pending the entry into force of such a treaty, all States concerned should declare and uphold a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices.

As regards outer space, Slovakia is committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the promotion of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment. We are concerned about the continued development and testing of anti-satellite weapons, including in respect of the risks associated with these weapons, particularly the generation of space debris, potentially long-lived, after the destruction of the targeted satellites.

We support efforts in the area of space security on improving transparency and confidence, avoiding risks of miscalculation and unwanted escalation. Slovakia supported and co-sponsored the resolution in the First Committee of the General Assembly entitled “Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours”, and we look forward to the discussions in the upcoming meetings of the open-ended working group in Geneva.

Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament bears special responsibility for moving the disarmament agenda forward. The decades-long deadlock, absence of consensus for negotiations on any of the core agenda items and the inability to adopt a comprehensive and balanced programme of work should be a wake-up call for the Conference.

Slovakia believes that the Conference should strive to revitalize its substantive work through other possible and available avenues. Slovakia supports advancing the substantive work of the Conference through discussions in subsidiary bodies. Through this pre-negotiating work, the Conference can advance core Conference issues, build on previous work and improve understanding between member States. Until the Conference is in a position to fulfil its crucial mandate and negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties, it could elaborate other instruments and norms, such as guidelines and codes of conduct.

We welcome efforts to improve the functioning of the Conference. In this regard, we support the coordinated approach taken by the group of the annual session’s six Presidents, in addition to the last President of the previous session and the first President of the next session. It contributes positive dynamics, better predictability and a collaborative and coherent approach to the work of the Conference.

Slovakia regrets that, in 2021, the Conference was not able to reach consensus on a technical update to its rules of procedure to reflect the equality of women and men. The proposal had strong support among Conference members, and my delegation was and continues to be ready to accept this technical change to the rules of procedure.

Slovakia pays due attention to the wish and interest of many States to enlarge the Conference membership. This issue should be reviewed at regular intervals in the Conference. The delegation of Slovakia would be in favour of discussing this issue. We also strongly believe, in line with the spirit of multilateralism, that all interested United Nations Member States wishing to participate in the work of the Conference as observers should be granted

this status. We believe that the participation of non-member States contributes positively to the work of the Conference and to the international community's joint efforts in the field of disarmament.

We encourage those member States which objected to requests to observe the work of the Conference in 2021 to show flexibility this year and allow the Conference to start its 2022 session in a constructive spirit.

Mr. President, to conclude, my delegation and I are committed to fully cooperating with you in order to bring the Conference back on track, and I thank you for your attention.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of Slovakia for his statement and for his words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Incarnato of Italy.

Mr. Incarnato (Italy): Mr. President, thank you for giving me the floor. At the outset, let me congratulate you on assuming your responsibility as the first President of the 2022 session of the Conference on Disarmament. Please rest assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference Ms. Valovaya for her intervention at the opening meeting and for her precious support, together with that of the secretariat.

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. Let me add some remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. President, we welcome your encouragement to exchange views today about the work of the Conference in the context of the current international security landscape. While we are convened here, all around the world, including not very far from where we sit, tensions rise and geopolitical rivalries increase. Heightened international and regional crises make the scenario currently before our eyes deeply troubling. We are facing problems that we cannot solve on our own, and in many areas of the world the pandemic has even exacerbated conflicts.

Under these circumstances, Italy believes that the revival of the Conference on Disarmament is needed and urgent, as disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control play a crucial role in the security landscape. We fully understand and share the sense of frustration stemming from the long and regrettable deadlock in the Conference's work. At the same time, we remain convinced that the Conference is an indispensable and unique body in the toolbox of the disarmament community, even though its potential remains clearly unfulfilled.

It is up to us to act in order to preserve and relaunch the role of the Conference. We should recognize that it will be difficult to make any progress by going back to old approaches. Instead, our work needs to adapt to new circumstances, to recognize the new layers of risk. Pending agreement on starting negotiations, and with a view to creating the conditions for the start of those negotiations, we should use this platform to enhance dialogue and transparency and to overcome the ambiguity and misperceptions that make the global atmosphere increasingly polarized and more confrontational than collaborative.

Italy reiterates its firm commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism and remains engaged in promoting these values in its work at the Conference. While we recognize the difficulties, we are ready to support your efforts to reach consensus on a programme of work. We are very much in favour of a more pragmatic approach without protracted procedural debates and with substantive work in many important areas of discussion instead.

I do not intend today to elaborate much on the agenda of the Conference, since I hope we will have the opportunity to do so during this year's session. But let me touch upon a few priorities which are particularly important for my country.

Italy reaffirms its firm commitment to disarmament and the international security, in particular sharing the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. Our efforts to make effective progress on nuclear disarmament are underpinned by our utmost concern for the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, with its three mutually reinforcing pillars, remains the cornerstone of

the global non-proliferation regime. We regret that the Review Conference had to be postponed again and look forward to actively participating in it as soon as the health situation allows.

At the same time, we believe we should work to reinvigorate the role of the Conference on Disarmament for nuclear disarmament as a forum to enhance and expand dialogue on strategic issues. Given the difficult political, geopolitical and security environment, it is clear that this is a long-term project to be attained through an inclusive and progressive approach.

But it is not impossible to overcome difficulties, especially if we are able to show political will and leadership. In this vein, Italy welcomes the joint statement of the five nuclear-weapon States on 3 January 2022 on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races. In particular, we appreciate the assertion that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. And we welcome the intention of those five States, the P5 States, to continue working in order to prevent a nuclear arms race, as well as to avoid military confrontations, strengthen stability and predictability and increase mutual understanding and confidence. We encourage the P5 States to further pursue constructive dialogue.

An important step in this direction would be the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We urge all States that have not yet done so, particularly the eight remaining annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay.

We also continue to support the immediate commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Pending its conclusion, all relevant States should abide by a moratorium. In December 2021, the General Assembly approved, by a vast majority, an important resolution on this issue, urging the Conference to work. We cannot ignore this appeal anymore, and while we recognize the work done by the P5 States on this subject, we believe that a collective effort is needed to make further progress.

Since we are talking about the current international security landscape, I would like to briefly touch upon two issues which we deem particularly urgent. The first is the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The full implementation of the deal and all of the provisions of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) is crucial for regional and international security. We remain concerned by Iranian disengagement from the Plan and urge Iran to revert to full implementation of its obligations under the Plan without delay and to desist from its activities related to uranium enrichment, the stockpiling of nuclear material, and the further development, at a faster pace, of technical capability.

We call on all participants to the Vienna talks to spare no efforts in addressing and resolving the current issues through dialogue as soon as possible. At the same time, we urge Iran to cooperate in full and timely fashion with the International Atomic Energy Agency with respect to all its safeguard-related commitments in order to clarify and resolve any pending issues.

Second, Italy condemns the multiple ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the latest a few days ago. Such illegal activities undermine regional and international peace and security. They are a matter of grave concern. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from further provocations and to take concrete steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. We call on Pyongyang to engage in credible negotiations in this respect and to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions. Italy continues to support the full implementation of the international sanctions regime.

To conclude, Italy believes that greater interaction of the Conference with society could make a key contribution to our work, helping to deepen our technical discussions and substantially enriching our debate.

Moreover, Italy promotes policies and approaches that enable the full empowerment of women, with due regard for the gendered impacts of armed violence and the importance of ensuring adequate representation of women in disarmament negotiations and peacebuilding programmes. We regret that despite broad support, the Conference was not

able to reach consensus on a technical update to its rules of procedure to reflect the equality of women and men during its 2021 session. And we hope that the 2022 session will allow for progress on this issue.

Today, more than ever, we face the concrete risk of the marginalization of the Conference and ultimately of its irrelevance. We need to remind ourselves of the special responsibility that we bear in the Conference and of the urgency to act with determination. We need a collective renewed commitment to strengthening the Conference and guaranteeing that it functions properly, thereby avoiding embarking on the path of a new arms race in any domain.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of Italy for his statement and for his words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Alicia Arango of Colombia.

Ms. Arango Olmos (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, please allow me to start by congratulating you once more on assuming the presidency. I wish you every success in carrying out your functions and assure you of my delegation's full support. Please also allow me to extend our gratitude for all the efforts you and your team have made prior to the formal start of our work in order to make this year's session a success.

I also take the opportunity to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, who is with us this morning. I welcome and support your call to move this important forum out of its long-standing stalemate. Through you, I also wish to thank the entire team of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for their valuable support in our work.

Mr. President, it is an honour for Colombia to be one of the six Presidents of this year's session. The collaborative format ensures coherence and continuity and a comprehensive approach to developing joint responses to the global challenges surrounding the items on our agenda. These concerted efforts are underpinned by the shared interest in seeing the Conference on Disarmament fulfil its mandate. My delegation trusts that this year we will refrain from politicizing our work and identify constructive pathways to build a safer and better protected world.

The current state of global affairs is not conducive to finding common ground. Our diplomatic efforts must therefore be more ambitious and skilful than ever. I firmly believe that the Conference on Disarmament continues to be a platform where States committed to peace and global security get together to develop a consensus that will enable negotiations of one or several of the topics on our agenda. Otherwise, the efforts of our States to keep this forum going would simply be useless. Colombia is hopeful that, during the session starting today, we will engage in substantive discussions in the course of which States can share their positions, but also reflect on the future of the Conference and look for elements that ensure its relevance and usefulness in an ever-more complex world.

For my delegation, learning about the positions and interests of other member States of the Conference is an essential part of fulfilling our mandate to negotiate multilateral instruments on disarmament. A constructive dialogue does not force us to sacrifice our national positions for a specific outcome, but it does help us move closer to this aim. In this endeavour, we also expect the Conference to work actively for the promotion of the effective and meaningful participation of women in forums and discussions on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, and for the inclusion of a gender perspective in our work.

If we want to achieve different results, we must do things differently and include fresh perspectives, realities and experiences that can strengthen this Conference and make it fit for the future.

Mr. President, in conclusion, please allow me to reiterate that my team and I personally stand ready to continue to work with you, the other Presidents of this year's session and the member States. We expect all delegations to demonstrate their commitment to the Conference of Disarmament and international peace and security through tangible actions.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of Colombia for her statement and for her words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Bachtobji of Tunisia.

Mr. Bachtobji (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference and to wish you every success in your work. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for her continued endeavours in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation, and for helping to promote international peace and security, particularly in the current sensitive circumstances in which the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic prevails. Its repercussions have been felt in all areas and have led, for instance, to the recent postponement of the tenth Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Accordingly, the Conference has a greater responsibility to achieve tangible results that meet the aspirations of the international community and the peoples of the world in the area of non-proliferation and disarmament.

Mr. President, with a view to supporting international efforts in the field of disarmament in light of the exacerbation of the COVID-19 pandemic, Tunisia submitted, during its membership of the United Nations Security Council for the period 2020–2021, a number of initiatives aimed at contributing effectively to the maintenance of international peace and security. For instance, it submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council, based on an initiative by the President of the Republic, which underscored the need for international solidarity and a ceasefire in order to confront the threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The resolution was supported by France and was unanimously adopted on 1 July 2020 as resolution 2532 (2020), which has become a frame of reference not only for the Security Council but also for many international and regional organizations. My country also chaired a high-level meeting on the challenges of maintaining international peace and security in fragile contexts. It underscored the fact that the challenges facing the African continent, emerging conflicts in various parts of the world, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic demand the adoption of a more comprehensive concept of international security that takes into account the interaction between, on the one hand, fragility-related factors and, on the other, violence and armed conflicts, as well as the need for civil and international society to assume its political responsibility to address such phenomena and their implications for international peace and security. Tunisia also supported the African Union Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative, aimed at ridding Africa of conflicts and creating conditions conducive to growth and development on the continent, an initiative that was approved under Security Council resolution 2457 (2019). In addition, Tunisia supported the African Union road map for a safe continent by 2063, Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want, based on an integrated strategy aimed at the abolition of violence and conflicts throughout the world and in Africa in particular.

Mr. President, the continued existence and development of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, especially in the Middle East, leads to high levels of tension, as well as the exacerbation of mistrust and incitement to violence. It thus poses a serious threat to security and stability and has a negative impact on development and inter-State cooperation. In addition, it exacerbates persistent terrorist threats and action by terrorist groups to obtain and use such weapons. This challenge renders the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East an urgent prerequisite for the consolidation of regional and international peace, security and stability. It is also essential to support the development of countries in the region and to reduce the risks of environmental pollution. On the other hand, our country underscores the right to peaceful uses of nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological technology, as well as the importance of encouraging technical cooperation in those areas in order to promote sustainable development. In this context, Tunisia appreciates the constructive role played by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, which launched the Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction project in order to enhance research and capacities for achieving that goal. We underscore the importance of ensuring the full and effective participation of women in establishing the zone and in all efforts to achieve peace and disarmament.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I cannot fail to express my country's appreciation of the action taken by the Conference on Disarmament to strengthen international peace and

security, and to disseminate a culture of non-proliferation and arms control that helps to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and provides support for relevant initiatives.

Mr. President, you can rely on our full support for your efforts to ensure that the current session is successful and achieves the desired productive results.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of Tunisia for his statement and for his words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Soualem of Algeria.

Mr. Soualem (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, at the outset I would like to congratulate you on assuming your responsibility as the first President of the 2022 session of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation will fully support your efforts and your concerted approach, driven by a spirit of continuity, cooperation and consultation, which augurs well for this session. My delegation believes that the continuity of our efforts will be our strength at the beginning of this new session and will allow us to seize on the commonalities identified so far and persevere, in order to usher in greater calm by giving priority to dialogue and the promotion of mutual trust. In this regard, I would like to emphasize that my country has faith in multilateralism and appreciates the collective effort, backed by genuine political will and a conducive atmosphere, put into advancing the work of this body and enabling it to return to its original vocation as the priority forum for the promotion and preservation of international security.

Given the particular context in which the work of the Conference has been conducted over the past two years, it seems appropriate to bear in mind the involvement of your predecessors in 2021 and 2020, who spared no effort in trying to advance the work of the Conference and whose endeavours were deeply affected by the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Indeed, the current worsening of the global health crisis once again gives us cause to reflect on the common destiny of humankind in the face of the various challenges it faces and on the absolute necessity for the Conference to fulfil its negotiating mandate and ensure that the common interest prevails and that we act together to reassure future generations by countering the risks associated with disarmament issues and contributing effectively to the preservation and strengthening of international peace and security.

This is fully consistent with the aims and objectives of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, the first paragraph of which recognizes that the ending of the arms race and the achievement of real disarmament are tasks of primary importance and urgency, and that to meet this historic challenge is in the political and economic interests of all nations and peoples of the world as well as in the interests of ensuring their genuine security and peaceful future.

Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament has made its mark on the world with its successes in the negotiation and adoption of international instruments, successes which have shown that the multilateral negotiation process in the field of disarmament is not by nature very complex, but requires a great deal of time, patience and effort, in a changing reality peppered with obstacles. In the current context, it is essential that the Conference meets expectations, responds to the many urgent appeals being made to it and issues the positive response that the international community, and more generally the public around the world, expects of it.

Over time, it has become vital that we should preserve its credibility, which is under threat, and strengthen its ability to fulfil its responsibilities by giving priority to the general interest and taking into account national interests. It is necessary, at this stage, to mobilize our efforts to energize the Conference and other disarmament mechanisms in order to reaffirm the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament. My country believes that the Conference must have sufficient time to deal with substantive issues in an orderly fashion.

To this end, a two-stage approach should be adopted, distinguishing between the phase of developing the conceptual framework for the programme of work, which lays down the general structure according to the items on the agenda, and the implementation phase, which encompasses all the details that will need to be decided on in the work of the future bodies

to be established for this purpose. This approach is based on taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the Conference's rules of procedure and established practices, as well as on the successful experiences of decisions that were adopted by consensus on the basis of the various proposals and initiatives recently submitted, with a view to re-establishing the Conference's status as a negotiating body. In this respect, it would be of great use for our work if we could be provided with an information paper with the relevant records of the Conference.

Mr. President, my country remains convinced that disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as of all weapons of mass destruction, are essential elements for the preservation and consolidation of international peace and security and for economic and social development. Algeria has always played a role in the pivotal moments in the history of disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. In 1979, it initiated the deliberations of the Committee on Disarmament, now the Conference on Disarmament. It had the honour of chairing the Conference in 2009, which led to the decision on the establishment of a programme of work, contained in document CD/1864, under the presidency of the late Ambassador Idriss Jazaïry, who passed away two years ago and whose legacy lives on in the work of the Conference. The Conference on Disarmament was also able to come significantly closer to consensus through a set of draft decisions submitted by my country when it assumed the first presidency of the Conference's 2020 session, which also served as a platform for the work of the 2021 session.

Algeria also chaired the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), at which 13 practical steps for nuclear disarmament were agreed, as well as the 2015 Review Conference. In addition, the Algerian chairmanship of the First Committee laid the groundwork for the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, held in 2017, during which the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted; the first meeting of the States Parties to that Treaty is scheduled to be held in a few weeks' time.

Mr. President, my country, which has suffered and continues to suffer the serious and disastrous human and environmental consequences of the nuclear tests carried out on its territory during the colonial era, is firmly convinced that nuclear disarmament remains an essential priority for the international community as a whole and that only this process can truly enable humanity to avoid the danger of nuclear weapons. In this context, we hope that the Tenth NPT Review Conference, which is due to take place in a few months' time, will lead to concrete results that reflect the aspirations of the international community. We also stress the importance of strengthening efforts to achieve universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in order to speed up its entry into force. Furthermore, the conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is of particular significance if we are to adequately address the issue of fissile material stocks; likewise, it will strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Algeria believes that achieving tangible progress in terms of negative security assurances through the conclusion of a legally binding international instrument is imperative in order to protect non-nuclear-weapon States from the use or threat of use of such weapons.

As for outer space, which poses a special challenge to international security, it is in all of our interests to ensure the necessary conditions for the peaceful and safe use of outer space. Emphasizing the importance of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, we believe it is important to set standards to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space.

Finally, at the start of the new session of the Conference, I would like to affirm that Algeria continues to support all efforts to promote the emergence of a consensus on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that will allow the return to negotiations in our forum. As such, my delegation is fully prepared to contribute to efforts to ensure success in that work.

Mr. President, before concluding, my country would like to emphasize that the Conference must broaden its membership in order to give it universal competence and prove its universal character.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of Algeria for his statement and for his words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Izquierdo Miño of Ecuador.

Mr. Izquierdo Miño (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, on behalf of the delegation of Ecuador, I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this delicate and difficult time, especially so for this forum, in which the international community faces the challenge of fulfilling its commitments to peace, security and the common good of humanity.

We are aware of your efforts and the transparency with which you have taken up your work. Please rest assured of my delegation's full support during your presidency, both as a member State of the Conference on Disarmament and in our capacity as one of the current session's six Presidents, in addition to the last President of the previous session and the first President of the next session (the P6 plus 2 format).

Mr. President, circumstances remain exceptional, and have been so for nearly two years. We are well aware that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has affected all countries without distinction. It has had, and will continue to have, devastating consequences on the life, health and economy of our populations, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.

In the light of the exceptional situation for both public health and global security, with its increasingly apparent consequences, my delegation wishes to reiterate what we have said in this forum on previous occasions: we are stunned by attitudes whereby hundreds of millions of dollars are invested in perfecting and stockpiling weapons in the prevailing interest of influence and power, while our health systems suffer from serious shortcomings and millions of people are locked in the everyday struggle for mere survival.

The pandemic has been a harsh reminder of the fundamental purpose of multilateralism and the ineluctable and crucial need for global solidarity and cooperation as principles of common interest for the entire international community. In this regard, my delegation is deeply concerned that the crisis caused by the pandemic has failed to raise the necessary awareness of the urgent need to strengthen multilateralism. Indeed, it seems that there are difficulties in achieving the ideal of international cooperation, the prospect of harmony and peace is remote, and in some forums the diplomatic community clearly lacks the will to engage in dialogue and negotiation.

In this context, Ecuador reiterates its long-standing position of principle that all countries have the right to participate in multilateral forums without restriction, particularly in this forum, which is of such great relevance to international peace and security.

Despite the call by the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 for a global ceasefire, which a large number of countries including Ecuador supported, conflict and the arms race continue unabated.

In the current setting, in the absence of measures to reduce them, global tensions have been on the rise. The global nuclear arms control system and dialogues on non-proliferation and general disarmament are in critical condition.

The Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has had to be postponed again but the extra time has not improved prospects for its outcome, which remains highly uncertain, while certain communications cast doubt on the implementation of existing commitments.

No progress has been made in respect of the bilateral and plurilateral treaties between nuclear-weapon States and, in recent times, several of them have even been suspended or terminated. This situation confirms an absence of trust, which many leaders are unable or unwilling to build or extend in international relations. This lack of trust is leading the world into a very dangerous impasse, characterized by a very dangerous fragility. There is a need for more diplomacy aimed at deterrence and negotiation.

In this context, the declaration made by the five presidents at the beginning of this year, in which they express their readiness to work with all States towards a security environment that enhances progress on disarmament towards the ultimate objective of a world free of nuclear weapons and their affirmation that a nuclear war can never be won and must never be waged, while certainly not enough, is important. In this vein and true to our commitment to peace and the conviction that peace and security can be achieved through multilateralism, Ecuador will do all it can to encourage the Conference on Disarmament to assume its responsibility and fulfil its mandate to negotiate legally binding instruments for disarmament.

As I mentioned last year, my delegation believes that small countries with little military or economic power have the right to demand security, to work jointly to strengthen multilateralism and to aspire to a peace that is possible only in a world free of weapons of mass destruction. We count on our status as active members of the international community embodied in the institutions of the United Nations. For this reason, my country has worked to promote multilateralism as the principal means of guaranteeing global peace and security, and thus the essential mechanism for promoting disarmament and non-proliferation and for seeking an effective international agreement that provides non-nuclear-weapon States with assurances against the use or threat of use of these weapons.

Over the decades, Ecuador has maintained its commitment to peace, disarmament and non-proliferation through active participation in the Conference and in the negotiation of instruments prohibiting weapons of mass destruction and regulating conventional weapons. In 1999, as one of the many examples of its leadership, Ecuador chaired the working group of the Disarmament Commission that managed to achieve consensus on the principles and guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. There have been very few agreements on disarmament since then.

Consequently, we recognize the importance of the views of member States of nuclear-weapon-free zones – both those that have been established and those that are being set up – when it comes to identifying the most suitable pathways by which the international community can negotiate effective and complete disarmament.

Before I conclude, I wish to note the first anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the important message reflected in the growing number of countries, including Ecuador, that have undertaken never under any circumstances to develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons.

Lastly, Mr. President, please allow me to reaffirm that Ecuador will assume its functions as the sixth and final president of 2022 session of the Conference on Disarmament with utmost responsibility. We hope that the report I will have to draft will carry important content and meaningful outcomes of the work conducted in the year in course, and that it will mark a turning point in the protracted stalemate in this forum.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of Ecuador for his statement and for his words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Hwang to speak as representative of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation would like to add a few words in its national capacity to the statement made by the European Union earlier. Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament opens again this year in a tense geopolitical context, which directly affects security and stability in Europe. In recent weeks, we have been experiencing a period of intense diplomacy in various forums and formats, aimed at de-escalating tensions in Ukraine and in the region. In this regard, France calls for specific measures to be taken to de-escalate the situation and recalls that a discussion on European security must necessarily include progress in resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine, and therefore a constructive re-engagement of the Russian Federation in the so-called Normandy format negotiations.

At the same time, the repeated missile launches by North Korea and the intensification of negotiations on the future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action remind us of the volatility of the strategic environment and the need to continue efforts to strengthen the

international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation architecture. My country will work on this actively, including as President of the Council of the European Union for the first half of 2022.

Beyond that, it is incumbent upon us to reflect collectively on how best to use the Conference on Disarmament, which remains a vital forum for issues of disarmament and international security. The Conference on Disarmament is the only tool available to the international community, not only for negotiating disarmament treaties but also for maintaining a regular strategic dialogue, which is an indispensable prerequisite to those negotiations.

France supports efforts to establish subsidiary bodies on the various topics on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, as providing an opportunity for in-depth preparatory work with a view to the negotiation of multilateral disarmament treaties, context permitting. As you know, my country is actively promoting the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament without delay, on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. This is unquestionably the ripest subject for negotiations and would contribute to advancing nuclear disarmament by limiting the production of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, the issue of outer space is also very topical, yet concerning, and requires serious strategic dialogue. In a rapidly changing space environment, new threats erode the security of our activities and operations. An analysis and the development of pragmatic proposals to improve the safety and security of our operations is urgent. For my country, this includes regulating behaviour in space, and we welcome the forthcoming launch of the work of the open-ended working group created following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 76/231. Given what is at stake in space today in terms of the security and prosperity of all nations, it is in the interest of all of us to actively engage in this work.

We regret the further postponement of the NPT Review Conference. At a time when the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery continues to grow, the Review Conference must be seen as an opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering support for the preservation and strengthening of the three pillars of this key instrument of the non-proliferation regime. We hope that the Conference can be held in April this year and we hope that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to play a role in nuclear disarmament in the run-up to this major milestone.

Finally, Mr. President, we must not shy away from the discussion that is needed on the functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. Among other things, we believe that it is worth exploring how the proposal to adopt gender-neutral rules of procedure for the Conference on Disarmament could be revived this year in order to make real progress. Similarly, we believe that all – and I mean all – requests for observer status should be met without reservation, in the spirit of multilateralism and inclusive diplomatic dialogue.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement and for his words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Gamaleldin of Egypt.

Mr. Gamaleldin (Egypt): At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on assuming your responsibility as President of the Conference on Disarmament at the beginning of this year's session and to assure you of my delegation's full support. I would also like to extend my words of appreciation to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and the members of the Conference secretariat, who continue to support the work of the Conference during such difficult times.

I would like to reaffirm Egypt's continued support for the Conference presidency in its constructive efforts to adopt a comprehensive and balanced work programme for the Conference on Disarmament and to express my country's aspiration for the success of the 2022 session in restoring the Conference to its role as a body that has long been pivotal in negotiating international treaties and agreements in the field of disarmament.

Mr. President, the beginning of the 2022 session of the Conference takes place in an extremely fragile, if not deteriorating, global security environment in which progress on

disarmament in all its aspects is more urgent than ever. We are faced with heightened and renewed tensions among States, challenges to existing norms and technological advances that provide opportunities, challenges and risks. Addressing them all by building on the extensive architecture and developing new disarmament measures should be the key focus of the 2022 session.

Egypt believes that the Conference on Disarmament is at the centre of the disarmament machinery. It is the single multilateral disarmament body, with a distinct mandate for negotiating legally binding disarmament instruments. It should be reinvigorated and enabled to fulfil its role as envisaged by the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The prolonged stalemate at the Conference should not persist and certainly should not keep us from exerting our utmost efforts to achieve a substantive breakthrough this year.

Egypt's view on the top priorities of the work of the Conference remains unchanged and is in line with the four core agenda items of the Conference.

First, the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, in implementation of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, remains the foremost priority.

Second, we believe that the Conference should start negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable legally binding instrument banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The instrument should fulfil both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. This can never be properly done if fissile material stocks are excluded from its scope. An instrument that bans only future production is hardly the objective, since it detracts from and undermines the disarmament objective.

Third, we firmly believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against their use or threat of use. Pending the achievement of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, there is an urgent need to conclude a universal, unconditional, irrevocable, legally binding instrument for effectively assuring non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under all circumstance.

Fourth, special attention should be accorded to the development and strengthening of the existing legal regime for promoting and maintaining outer space for peaceful activities and preserving its nature as a common heritage of humankind. The essential role of outer space technologies in all human activities and the extreme vulnerability of the outer space environment make it necessary to act now to prevent outer space from turning into a domain for conflict and arms races. A legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space is significant, especially taking into consideration the alarming trends in the possible weaponization of outer space and the development by several States of anti-satellite capabilities.

In this vein, it is important to recognize the most recent process that was established by General Assembly resolution 75/36, on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. Egypt voted in favour of this resolution on the understanding that it represents a step in the right direction towards the development of rules that could pave the way to the legally binding instrument needed to address threats to space systems, including terrestrial and space-based threats, from a comprehensive point of view.

It is also important to highlight that Egypt is a sponsor of three of the five resolutions dedicated to questions of space security at the First Committee of the General Assembly. For years, alternating with Sri Lanka, Egypt has also been submitting a resolution to the General Assembly on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We view these resolutions and other important initiatives, including the draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, which was presented to the Conference, as complementary rather than contradictory. We sincerely hope that the polarization of the issue of space security comes to an end. We believe the Conference is perfectly situated to play a harmonizing role in this respect.

Mr. President, Egypt looks forward to the success of the tenth Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Egypt emphasizes that the success of the Review Conference is inextricably linked to its ability to adopt a balanced outcome that reaffirms past

commitments and provides for its implementation in a timely manner, especially with regard to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction – a cornerstone of the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

On a brighter note, Egypt wishes to highlight the successful convening of the session of the United Nations Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in New York in November 2021. The Conference consensually agreed on several milestones, including the adoption of the rules of procedure of the Conference, with an understanding that all decisions will be adopted by consensus. Moreover, the second session adopted a consensual report on its work. Furthermore, the Conference agreed to establish a working committee to continue deliberations on the establishment of the zone during the intersessional period. These major achievements are an important step in the right direction.

The deliberations and the successful outcome of the Conference prove without any doubt that this process is an inclusive, non-discriminatory and promising process that aims to address the relevant concerns of all States in the region. We therefore invite sceptics to reassess positions and factor in the merits of the Conference.

This process asserts and reconfirms its ability to provide a reliable and genuine mechanism to operationalize and implement the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and the 2010 action plan. Egypt believes that this consensus-based process could significantly contribute to strengthening the international nuclear disarmament regime and hasten the advent of a world free of nuclear weapons.

We are today one step closer on the long path towards the objective of ridding our region of all weapons of mass destruction, and we expect the international community's support for this process.

Egypt's position on the participation of non-member States has been consistent throughout the years. This position is founded on our firm belief that the Conference on Disarmament is a technical body that is mandated with multilateral disarmament negotiations. We believe that the participation of non-member States contributes positively to the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Egypt values your commitment to starting substantive work at the Conference, Mr. President. For its part, Egypt will strive throughout this year's session, in its national capacity and as part of the group of the session's six Presidents, in addition to the first and last Presidents of the 2023 and 2021 sessions, respectively, to work constructively with you and all members towards the achievement of the objectives of the Conference, which are neither impossible to attain nor hindered by any obstacles that cannot be overcome. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of Egypt for his statement and for his words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Hashmi of Pakistan.

Mr. Hashmi (Pakistan): Mr. President, on behalf of my delegation, I congratulate you on assuming the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We deeply value your wealth of arms control experience, expertise and foresight. We also recognize your personal contribution to this body as part of the Chinese delegation in the 1990s. We are confident that you will steer the work of this Conference very ably and wisely. We also welcome your constructive engagement with members of this body and the early circulation of your plans for our work under your presidency. We assure you of our full cooperation and support. Allow me to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Febrian Ruddyard of Indonesia and Ambassador Dušan Matulay of Slovakia. We look forward to working closely with them. We thank the Conference on Disarmament secretariat for its support under the skilful leadership of Secretary-General Valovaya.

In line with the general format of today's meeting, let me share Pakistan's perspective on the drivers of the international security landscape and their varied impacts, the role and relevance of this body and the priorities it should pursue in the year ahead.

Our world today is adrift, marked by a fragile security environment at the global and regional levels. New challenges are accompanied by the erstwhile ones, as we witness an escalation of political and military tensions across Asia and elsewhere, a renewed and expanded global arms race in which outer space, cybertechnologies, artificial intelligence and new delivery systems are being weaponized, the revival of military alliances and bloc politics, the demise and erosion of key arms control agreements, long-standing norms and the arms control architecture, the non-fulfilment of nuclear disarmament obligations, even after five decades, and the virtual demise of the international consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation due to discriminatory policies, growing mistrust and strategic asymmetries.

The danger of war, in particular nuclear war, is growing. The risk of a nuclear confrontation, either by reckless design or by miscalculation, is increasing. The recognition of these dangers in the recent joint statement by the permanent members of the Security Council is a positive development. So is the acknowledgement of the creation of a security environment more conducive to progress on nuclear disarmament. An agreed pathway on concrete measures for strategic stability at the global and regional levels is essential to mitigate these risks.

This pathway requires, inter alia, compliance with existing nuclear disarmament obligations, redressal of conventional and strategic asymmetries at the regional level, pacific settlement of outstanding disputes, cessation of destabilizing arms build-ups and addressing the security concerns of all States, as envisaged in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The regional security environment in South Asia continues to deteriorate primarily because an ultranationalist regime in the region is pursuing: (1) ideologically driven Hindutva and Hindu Rashtra policies; (2) hegemony, unlawful elections and subversion in neighbouring countries; and (3) unprecedented acquisition, expansion, and modernization of arms and delivery systems.

This regime, an aspirant for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council and the self-professed largest democracy, continues to violate international law and democratic principles with impunity. Since August 2019, this regime has embarked on imposing a genocidal final solution in occupied Jammu and Kashmir in open defiance of Security Council resolutions.

It has unleashed a most brutal reign of terror and oppression on the Kashmiri people, youth, women and civilians and even against its own minority populations. It has financed, facilitated and directed State-sponsored terrorism against Pakistan and other neighbours.

To mask these crimes, this regime has resorted to the world's most notorious disinformation campaign. In addition to staging false-flag operations, this regime has embarked on massive militarization by spending US\$ 73 billion last year alone on the acquisition and development of new conventional and non-conventional land-, air- and sea-based weapon systems. It has nuclearized the Indian Ocean, deployed anti-ballistic missile systems, canisterized nuclear-capable missiles, acquired anti-satellite weapons and increased the range and sophistication of all its delivery systems. Seventy per cent of India's weaponry and forces are deployed against Pakistan.

A lack of global accountability and a generous supply of advanced weapons, as well as technologies, have enabled India to continue its defiance of international law, norms and rules. These acts of omission and commission have emboldened this nuclear-armed State to operationalize its dangerous doctrines of pre-emptive aggression against Pakistan into warfighting strategies to continue perpetuating occupation and to foment terrorism.

The international community, including this body, must call out this impunity and wilful defiance of international legality. Failure to do so entails risks to regional peace and security in South Asia and beyond. This Conference cannot and should not ignore these clear and present dangers.

Pakistan desires and is determined to pursue peace, development and strategic stability in our region, based on sovereign equality and mutual respect. Pakistan cannot, however, remain oblivious to the evolving security dynamics in our immediate neighbourhood. Pakistan will do whatever it takes to deter and defeat all forms of aggression.

Peace and stability in South Asia can be achieved through: (1) resolution of outstanding disputes between Pakistan and India – first and foremost, the resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with Security Council resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people; (2) maintenance of a balance of conventional and strategic military forces between India and Pakistan; and (3) reciprocal measures for nuclear, missile and military restraint between the two countries. Pakistan's proposal for a strategic restraint regime in South Asia remains on the table.

Pakistan considers the Conference on Disarmament a vital organ of the international security architecture, the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating body and an indispensable part of the United Nations disarmament machinery. The role and place of the Conference, as the only forum where all militarily significant States participate on an equal footing, remain unique. However, absent a more conducive environment, acknowledgement and redressal of vital national security interests and concerns, this body is likely to remain hamstrung, affected also by the tumultuous geopolitical and fragile security environment at the global and regional levels.

The Conference has its own role and responsibility within this larger context. To begin with, its work must respond to the foremost global challenges. Approaches and proposals that ignore the effects of policies and actions taken outside this body have not worked for decades and are unlikely to do so in the future.

Ascribing arbitrary priorities and repeating self-serving notions of ripeness have prevented the Conference from addressing its most fundamental agenda item – that is, nuclear disarmament – for too long. In fact, the Conference has been deliberately prevented for several decades from negotiating on some of its oldest agenda items, with far-reaching consequences for international security.

Blaming the long-standing deadlock on the Conference's rules of procedure or the methods of its work does not stand the test of facts either. Several important treaties have been successfully negotiated with the same procedures and methods.

A concerted effort is needed to revive the international consensus on security and disarmament. This consensus will have to be anchored in demonstrable adherence to international law. It must both acknowledge and take steps to mitigate the dangers of war and arms races. It must contribute to enhanced security for all States at the lowest possible level of armaments. And it must dispense with special exemptions and exceptional treatment.

Pakistan remains firmly committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world that is achieved in a universal, verifiable and non-discriminatory manner. Pakistan will continue to support commencement of negotiations without further delay on a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention towards that end in the Conference.

Pakistan also supports the immediate start of negotiations in the Conference on legally binding negative security assurances and the draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space. The global build-up of advanced weapons, platforms and means of delivery, in combination with rising tensions, has increased the danger of a nuclear war. This makes work on the agenda item prevention of nuclear war a high area of priority for this Conference.

Should there be consensus, Pakistan stands ready to join substantive work on other contemporary issues such as chemical and biological terrorism, weaponization of cyberspace, lethal autonomous weapons systems and other types of destabilizing weapons systems, including delivery systems.

As regards fissile material, the ritual calls by a handful of States for a treaty cutting off production only, or a so-called fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), as envisaged under the Shannon mandate, remain a diversionary tactic at best. A treaty that ignores huge asymmetries in fissile material stocks would diminish rather than promote stability and security at the global and regional levels. Such a proposal has minimal disarmament value as well. It serves only to freeze the status quo to the perpetual strategic advantage of a select few. That these asymmetries in our region are being further accentuated by generous external support and supplies speaks to the flawed and untenable nature of this outdated mantra.

On the other hand, Pakistan has called for a fissile material treaty that covers existing stocks in a verifiable manner. Amid the ongoing geopolitical risks to strategic stability, the proposal for a so-called fissile material cut-off treaty does not represent a solution to contemporary arms control and disarmament requirements.

It is well past time to instead start work in earnest towards developing a new basis for negotiations on a treaty whose scope expressly encompasses existing stocks and applies equally to all States without discrimination. Any proposed treaty that is completely cost-free for its proponents, while being disproportionately detrimental to the legitimate security interests of my country, would remain a non-starter.

The Conference on Disarmament can and should resume substantive work on all its agenda items, taking into account what has worked and what has not. It is vital that all agenda items be treated in a balanced and comprehensive manner.

Recent developments related to outer space, including in South Asia, add to the urgency of concluding the draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space. Together with nuclear disarmament, proposals for negative security assurances and prevention of an arms race in outer space have been on the Conference agenda for the longest duration and are the ripest for commencing negotiations.

As a first step, the Conference should prioritize commencement of negotiations on legally binding negative security assurances. Such negative security assurances are low-hanging fruit that does not affect the core national security interests of any State.

My delegation will continue to engage with you, Mr. President, and other members of the Conference to resume substantive work on all agenda items and, where agreement can be reached, on new and emerging issues. We will engage in this exercise constructively and on the basis of the parameters I have outlined before.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan for his statement and for his words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Belousov of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, Secretary-General of the Conference, distinguished colleagues, first of all, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Li Song, the Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China, on assuming his duties as President of the Conference on Disarmament. Like all the other Presidents of this session, he can rely on the constructive cooperation of the Russian delegation. I would like to wish us all success in reaching positive results during the 2022 session.

Our delegation fully aligns itself with the statement of the Permanent Representative of France in his capacity of current coordinator of the process being pursued by the five nuclear-weapon States. Please allow me to make some additional comments on behalf of the Russian Federation following on from what was said by Ambassador Hwang.

In our view, in the current review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the five nuclear-weapon States have made significant progress in establishing constructive interaction. Thanks to the successive coordinators from China, the United Kingdom and, of course, France, it has proved possible to establish a regular and substantive dialogue on five areas.

Efforts on some tracks have already borne fruit. The statement of 3 January by the leaders of our States and Governments regarding the inadmissibility of nuclear war and the need to avoid an arms race was a historic milestone. We consider that the endorsement of this well-known formula is an exceedingly important event, not only within the context of the NPT but also in respect of ensuring predictability in strategic relations and the strengthening of international security as a whole.

The activities of the five nuclear-weapon States continue in other areas. Several documents reflecting their common understanding of their further cooperation on topical NPT issues and, in the wider context of arms control, on disarmament and non-proliferation have already been presented to the international community. The joint document on reducing

strategic risks deserves particular attention. The second version of the Glossary of Key Nuclear Terms prepared under the supervision of China was also a major contribution.

Of course, interaction between our countries is not easy. Each document that is agreed is the result of the unseen labour of our experts and long hours of discussion. Yet each document, each joint document is a token of the readiness of our five countries to pursue dialogue and seek compromise, despite the noticeable difference in our positions.

The focus of the nuclear-weapon States on achieving a positive result is evidenced by the fact that, at the end of their conference in Paris in December 2021, they were able to come up with a joint communiqué reaffirming their commitment to their obligations under the NPT, including its article VI.

At the same time, as experience shows, the implementation in practice of agreements already made is no less difficult and crucial. It seems that the five nuclear-weapon States need to make further efforts in this direction. Russia is prepared for such work.

On the whole, we believe that the nuclear-weapon States are coming to the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons well equipped to lay a sound foundation for further joint work and, possibly, for deeper cooperation during the next review cycle.

In conclusion, I would like to touch on another important point. Russia has advocated and continues to advocate giving all States Members of the United Nations the equal opportunity to participate in the work of our forum as observers. We see this as a measure to ensure the inclusive nature of the Conference's activities and as a way of giving effect to the right of any State Member of the United Nations to take part in the discussion of international security questions. Such a right is embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. Our delegation expresses the hope that, in the plenary meeting on Thursday, all applications for observer status at the Conference will be granted.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of the Russian Federation for his statement and for his words of support for the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Han of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Han Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Ambassador, on assuming the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament this year. And I wish you every success in carrying out your duties. I also sincerely hope that under your guidance, the Conference will move forward towards resuming its substantive work, and I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in your endeavour.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had a serious impact on our activity. However, the mandate of the Conference as a multilateral disarmament negotiating forum remains critical. Given the current fragile and complex international security environment, we should pool our efforts to make a major breakthrough in overcoming the long-standing stalemate at the Conference and revitalize its work. To this end, my delegation will engage constructively in the Conference's deliberations and, in particular, will fulfil its responsibility during its presidency this year, within the framework of the coordinating mechanism formed by the group of the year's six Presidents, in addition to the last President of the 2021 session and the first President of the 2023 session.

The peaceful and safe world to which humankind aspires is a denuclearized world that presupposes the total elimination of nuclear weapons. When, in 1945, nuclear weapons were first used, the world clearly witnessed the catastrophic damage they caused, which remains in our memory. Preventing the recurrence of such nuclear calamities is the historical mission and duty entrusted to our generation for the prosperity and happiness of future generations.

However, it is the reality today that the threat or use of nuclear weapon still exists, with the nuclear arms race in full swing, contrary to the aspirations and efforts of humankind to build a world free from nuclear weapons. On the other hand, bilateral and multilateral disarmament treaties that promoted nuclear disarmament and confidence-building for several decades have ceased to exist or have become mere scrap paper one after another in recent years, to the great disappointment of the international community.

Not a few countries labour under the misunderstanding that the United States is hostile to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea because the latter possesses nuclear weapons. In fact, it is the hostile policy of the United States, in place for several decades now, and the nuclear threat against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that left us with no other option but to choose the path of building self-defensive deterrence.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea war deterrent is a self-defence deterrent to prevent war itself and safeguard our sovereign rights. It does not target any specific country or force. All measures taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to strengthen its national defence capability are righteous activities designed to actively cope with the security environment of the Korean Peninsula and the region and to safeguard the security of the State and its people.

In this regard, my delegation strongly rejects certain allegations of the European Union and other countries in which they referred to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's right to self-defence. They are a clear expression of ignorance of reality and a provocation based on double standards.

As for the Security Council resolutions, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea never recognized them. It rejects them, as they are a wanton encroachment upon the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and a product of a policy of hostility to my country by the United States and others.

The recent test firing of a new type of weapon was one of the activities organized to carry out the medium- and long-term plan for the development of national science, and it does not pose a threat to or damage the security of neighbouring countries or the region. Nonetheless, the United States referred to the Security Council the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's normal activities pertaining to its right to self-defence and even went so far as to impose sanctions, thus intentionally escalating the situation. The United States accusation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's legitimate exercise of the right to self-defence is an intolerable provocation, a clear example of double standards and a flagrant violation of sovereignty.

The United States threatened the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through unprecedented, vicious hostile policy and constant nuclear blackmail. Therefore, it is illogical for the United States to accuse the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's self-defence deterrent of being a threat.

In the last few years alone, after the summit between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, the United States has staged hundreds of joint war drills, breaking its promise to discontinue them, and conducted tests of all kinds of strategic weapons, while shipping high-tech offensive military equipment into South Korea and nuclear strategic weapons into the region around the Korean Peninsula, seriously threatening the security of our State.

The United States viciously slandered our State and enforced over 20 independent sanctions. In particular, the current United States Administration is persisting in its attempt to deprive the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its rights to self-defence. This shows that though the United States Administration is making noise about diplomacy and dialogue, it is still engrossed in its policy of isolating and stifling the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

For the sake of maintaining peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, the United States should withdraw its hostile policy and double standards in relation to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and permanently end offensive military exercises and the deployment of various nuclear strategic assets in and around the Korean Peninsula.

Bolstering national defence capabilities is a legitimate right of sovereign States. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will not abandon this just right. We will continue strengthening war deterrents to cope with the security environment of the Korean Peninsula and safeguard national sovereignty and the security of our people.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue in the future to fulfil its responsibility for defending peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and the rest of the world.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and for his words of support for the Chair. As today is the first time that the new Permanent Representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Ruddyard, is participating in a meeting of the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome him on behalf of the Conference member States. He is very keen to make his first general statement to the plenary today. I would like to invite him to be the last Ambassador to make a general statement today. After that, the Ambassador of India has asked to exercise his right of reply. Ambassador Ruddyard, you have the floor.

Mr. Ruddyard (Indonesia): Let me begin, Mr. President, by expressing appreciation for your kind words and those of the Ambassador of Pakistan in welcoming me. I look forward to working with you and all colleagues. Let me also join others in congratulating you on your assumption of the role of first President of the Conference on Disarmament for the 2022 session. I wish you every success. Please rest assured of Indonesia's support and cooperation. I also would like to thank Director-General Valovaya for her statement and her commitment to helping the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Indonesia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of 21 by the Ambassador of Mongolia earlier this morning.

The current situation continues to challenge all aspects of our life, including in the area of peace and security. Just to name a few, the tenth Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference has been postponed again, denying us the opportunity to review the implementation of the cornerstone of the disarmament regime and set out our future endeavours.

Many major disarmament meetings have continued taking place but have had to adjust modalities and ways of deliberation. States' commitments to preventing arms races and to disarmament and to non-proliferation obligations are, in view of worrying developments in some regions, still in question. Conflict and tension, unfortunately, have not gone away, and in some parts of the world they are getting even worse.

Nonetheless, Mr. President, we also note some encouraging developments in the field of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Since its entry into force last year, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has gained more support. Also worth mentioning are the extension of the New START, the ongoing efforts on the Iran nuclear deal and the strategic stability dialogues between the United States and Russia. We welcome the constructive engagement from the two countries to address their differences through dialogue and diplomacy.

The joint statement on preventing nuclear weapons and avoiding arms races by the five nuclear-weapon States released earlier this year is also welcome. And we call nuclear-weapon States to turn their words into concrete action towards nuclear disarmament, including in the Conference on Disarmament.

Bearing this in mind, I believe that the Conference should never abandon its effort to rebuild its credibility and relevance, and in this regard allow me to share three key points.

First, while pursuing the realization of the Conference's main mandate, let us also be mindful of maintaining the positive atmosphere in the Conference. The rule and spirit of consensus should not be abused to politicize our work.

It is my delegation's hope that this year, the Conference will be able to accept all of the observer requests. As many emphasized, having a diversity of voices is instrumental. Inclusion is a principle of multilateralism, and a wider observership will help make the Conference's work more relevant. We need to stop the unconstructive approach that started with the rejection of the request made by the State of Palestine in 2019. And in this regard, we call on all States to let the beginning of our session be conducive to substantive progress in the rest of the session.

Second, we reiterate the urgency for the Conference to execute its mandate as set out by the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and to adopt a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. The work of the previous presidency has been tremendous and has provided a basis for our deliberations. The Conference should not reinvent the wheel. It should instead work on the draft that came closest to enjoying consensus last year.

Breaking the impasse that the Conference has been at for almost three decades is, of course, far from easy. And in that regard, we encourage you, Mr. President, to continue conducting comprehensive consultations with all delegates to find common ground. We also call on delegates to exercise flexibility and engage constructively.

Our views on the programme of work remain unchanged. It has to be comprehensive and balanced, to build upon the previous work of the Conference, including in the 2018 subsidiary bodies, and eventually to lead us to further substantive progress, in particular towards negotiations on the Conference's core issues.

Third, my delegation understands that we have our own positions and priorities, including in relation to which agenda items we believe the Conference should prioritize or to which the time is ripe for negotiations on. However, regardless of how much attention we pay to certain agenda items, we should also be fair and considerate of others' priorities and positions in relation to other core issues of the Conference. With that, we will make sure that no one is left behind and we can move forward together.

To conclude, Mr. President, we stand ready to help the Conference to resume its substantive work and fulfil its mandate as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Ambassador of Indonesia for his statement and for his words of support for the Chair. We have had a good turnout this morning, and there are still six or seven colleagues who have asked to take the floor, but the time available this morning does not allow us to hear any more of your general exchange of views. I would therefore like to conclude the meeting by giving the floor to the Ambassador of India, who has asked to make a statement in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, I am taking the floor to exercise India's right of reply to respond to the continued abuse of the Conference on Disarmament by Pakistan.

Pakistan's desperate attempts to peddle falsehoods and the habit of abusing the sanctity of multilateral forums deserve our collective contempt. Pakistan has made a number of futile and unsubstantiated allegations against India, including in relation to the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. These do not merit a response, as they pertain to matters internal to India. Let me reiterate here that the entire territory of Jammu and Kashmir was, is and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India. This includes the areas that are under the illegal occupation of Pakistan.

We call upon Pakistan to immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation. Given its established State practice of hosting, aiding and actively supporting terrorists, how could one expect any constructive contribution from Pakistan to the Conference on Disarmament? Or, for that matter, to any other body that deals with important matters of international peace and security?

Pakistan's baseless accusations are indeed rich coming from a nation that is encouraging sectarian violence against Muslims and suppresses the rights of minorities. We expect nothing new from this delegation that harbours a deep sense of insecurity and orchestrated hatred for India and our secular credentials and the values that my country stands for. However, despite its hopeless efforts, the world is able to see through its deceit and doublespeak. It is time to hold Pakistan to account and not let it abuse United Nations platforms for spreading disinformation or hate and inciting violence.

As a responsible State, India strictly abides by its obligations under international treaties and needs no advice from a country which has a proven track record of illicit export of nuclear material and technology. India's security concerns are not confined to a region and therefore India has always approached these issues in a global context.

As the epicentre of global terrorism, Pakistan is the biggest destabilizing force in the world and has repeatedly indulged in cross-border terrorism. It has no regard for United Nations principles. While Pakistan's Permanent Representative speaks about peace and security here, his Prime Minister glorifies global terrorists like Osama bin Laden after killing more than 3,000 people on 9/11 alone as a martyr. What better proof of the utter duplicity that this country is infamous for could there be?

In contrast to India, which takes a constructive approach to disarmament matters, Pakistan has only been disruptive. It is 26 years now that the world is paying the price for Pakistan's obstructionist tactics in the Conference on Disarmament, not allowing the Conference to adopt and implement a programme of work. It has the dubious distinction of having single-handedly blocked the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, including in 2009, when the Conference adopted a consensus programme of work. Having joined the consensus on the programme of work, Pakistan revealed its true character by soon making a complete U-turn and blocking any work by the Conference.

Mr. President, the Conference has a vast agenda dealing with global issues relating to disarmament and international security. This is not the forum to address bilateral or regional issues. We wish to reiterate that bilateral and regional security issues have no place in the Conference's considerations. The Conference should not only categorically reject Pakistan's nefarious and vicious designs but also collectively condemn Pakistan for its repeated efforts to politicize its work and hijack its mandate. Going by its past practice and compulsive obsession with India, Pakistan may exercise its right of reply and continue its malicious false propaganda against my country, but I shall refrain from responding to it out of respect for the work of the Conference under your able leadership and guidance. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Omar (Pakistan): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your kind indulgence. I just wish to take this opportunity to reserve my country's right of reply at the next opportunity that we get to speak at the Conference on Disarmament.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): Chile, Austria, Canada, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands and the Islamic Republic of Iran remain on today's list of speakers, as do Japan and Ukraine, so I will ask the Secretariat to schedule those statements for the beginning of the plenary session on Thursday morning. If there are no other requests for the floor, that concludes our business for this morning. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 27 January at 10 a.m. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.