

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand three hundred and ninety-fifth plenary meeting

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President: Mr. Piotr Stachńczyk (Poland)

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The President: I call to order the 1395th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Excellencies, dear colleagues, Ms. Soliman, ladies and gentlemen, let me cordially welcome all of you back after the summer recess. I hope that you had a good time, rest and relaxation. Allow me, especially, to warmly welcome the new Permanent Representative of South Africa to the Conference on Disarmament, Her Excellency Ambassador Nozipho Joyce Mxakato-Diseko.

We are assuming now our duties in the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the next three weeks. Before I turn to the upcoming days, let me briefly review the first week of our presidency in June. On 30 June, at the 1394th plenary meeting, I officially proposed the draft decision for the establishment of a programme of work contained in document CD/WP.595. Regrettably, this did not receive a consensus. I would like to stress that the primary motivation of our activity was and still is the situation of the Conference: the overly long stalemate should force us to seek solutions for getting out of this situation. That is why we proposed to agree on a programme of work based on what in our view was the most promising proposal. That attempt did not succeed. It was, in our mind, an important sign and manifestation of the goodwill of the whole Conference.

This year's session of the Conference is coming to an end. Nevertheless, I remain open to further consultations on a programme of work and I still stand ready to meet and consult with any delegation in order to better prepare ourselves for the next session. Any practical ideas which would pave the way for better cooperation in the next year are of the utmost importance. I think we need more sincere discussion which will lead to mutual understanding. As we signalled in June, we intend to initiate an internal debate within the Conference on the main international challenges of disarmament processes, which could be continued by the following presidencies. Therefore, we propose an informal plenary meeting on 9 August, in seminar style, concerning this issue. We have invited two experts to address disarmament challenges: Ms. Togzhan Kassenova of Kazakhstan, who is based at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace in Washington, D.C., and Mr. Lucasz Kulesa of Poland, who is based at the European Leadership Network in London. We count very much on active participation by all Conference member States, especially the nuclear States. We encourage you to express your views. Today, this evening probably, you will receive brief information on the details of this event.

Now, I would like to give the floor to the delegations that wish to address the Conference this morning. The list of speakers contains the following delegations: South Africa, China, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom. I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ambassador Mxakato-Diseko of South Africa.

Ms. Mxakato-Diseko (South Africa): Mr. President, my delegation would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wishes to assure you of our full support and cooperation. I personally would like to thank you for your gracious words of welcome.

This is the first time that I am taking the floor in this historic body as the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations and other international organizations based in Geneva. It is indeed a great honour for me to represent my country in the Conference, and I look forward to working with all fellow Conference members in the years to come. I take up my new responsibilities at a difficult time in the history of this body that has for too long been denied the opportunity to fulfil its rightful role as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Given the many years of impasse, many inside and outside this Conference have started questioning its relevance as a negotiating forum. In the years since the end of the cold war, significant progress has been made in taking forward a number of issues on the international agenda, not least through the adoption of instruments such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Anti-Personnel Land Mine Convention, the Cluster Munitions Convention and the Arms Trade Treaty. Some of these instruments have already made a material difference to the lives of people, including on the African continent, who were severely affected by the indiscriminate and inhumane impact of certain weapons. Other instruments have strengthened international norms in the area of both nuclear and conventional weapons. Regrettably, none of these instruments were adopted by this body, which was established specifically for that purpose.

My country attaches great importance to consensus decision-making. As universal adherence to multilateral agreements provides the strongest expression of international norms, consensus should always remain our goal. But when the notion of consensus is used in a manner that allows a tiny minority to veto the will of the overwhelming majority, we have to question that practice. This applies equally to the manner in which we conduct our work in the Conference. We do not believe that the consensus rule in the Conference was meant to stifle progress. On the contrary, it requires all of us to show maximum flexibility by taking into consideration the views, interests and priorities of all States. When we also ignore the recommendations of the United Nations General Assembly calling on us to take action to strengthen international peace and security through the negotiation of legally binding measures, we do so at tremendous cost to all of us. This not only undermines our collective security interests, it also undermines multilateralism. While all States may not immediately be ready to join instruments negotiated in this forum, this should not prevent us from undertaking the task with which we have been entrusted. Why would we not support the commencement of negotiations on a fissile missile treaty, a nuclear weapons convention or a framework treaty, when the vast majority of States are ready to subscribe to such higher norms? Or should we interpret that as an indication that the possessors of nuclear weapons are no longer interested in the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, contrary to their legal obligations and all political commitments? The same can be said of negotiations on other key issues on the Conference's agenda, such as the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

It is widely acknowledged that the nuclear non-proliferation regime is under significant stress. This is not because of the lack of an outcome document at the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference or the 20-year stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. It is the result of persistent efforts by some to reinterpret their legal obligations on nuclear disarmament and the commitments they had made in this regard. It is a denial of the fact that nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to humanity and that a double standard cannot deliver consistent, long-term results. Credible arguments against proliferation cannot be made by those who extol the alleged virtues of nuclear weapons in arguing that they provide security and have in fact protected us from another world war, or that they somehow act as a deterrent against contemporary threats. It is time to acknowledge that arguments in favour of the retention of nuclear weapons only serve as an encouragement for proliferation and undermine the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

We sometimes hear arguments that this body cannot be divorced from the external environment in which it operates and that the conditions are not conducive to progress. Yet, when we hear the persistent and widespread calls for progress on nuclear disarmament, they are dismissed and our attention is diverted to the perceived security interests of a handful of States.

This is not sustainable, Mr. President. This body was established to create new norms to secure a better world and future for generations to come. If we had had to wait until the negotiation of a biological weapons convention or a chemical weapons convention until all such weapons had been eliminated, we would still be waiting. Instead, despite the reservation of some possessors, we proceeded with negotiations and concluded these instruments, which have undoubtedly contributed to international security. These instruments have stigmatized these weapons and allowed us to work with determination towards their total elimination.

I represent a country that turned its back on nuclear weapons and today enjoys peace and security within its region and the world. Nuclear weapons are not only inherently immoral and unethical, given the catastrophic consequences of their use, but they also act as instruments of threat and oppression. As we have seen since 1945, nuclear weapons have proven not to deter conflict and war, terrorism or any other major threats to international peace and security. Instead, they have made conflict more dangerous and significantly contributed to insecurity. Consequently, these weapons have no place in the world we want and that our children deserve.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we welcome the efforts and proposals already made during this session of the Conference aimed at resuming substantive work. My team and I

stand ready to work with all delegations during my term in Geneva to break the impasse and to restore confidence in this body.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to His Excellency Ambassador Fu Cong of China.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation wishes to begin by expressing its profound dismay at the numerous terrorist attacks that have taken place in France, Germany, Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria over the past few weeks, resulting in massive deaths and injuries. We strongly condemn acts of terrorism, and we express our deep grief for the victims of such acts as well as our sincere condolences to those injured and the families of the victims. China resolutely opposes terrorism in all its forms and stands ready to work with the international community to actively deepen cooperation on counter-terrorism, jointly protect the personal safety of the world's people and preserve peace and stability around the globe.

Mr. President, since assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, you have laboured assiduously to achieve a programme of work for the Conference in order that substantive work on various items can begin as soon as possible. China expresses its appreciation for this. As it has in the past, the Chinese delegation will work with you. I should also like at this point to welcome the Permanent Representative of South Africa; our delegation looks forward to a good working relationship with the South African delegation.

On 25 June of this year, President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China and President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation signed a joint statement on strengthening global strategic stability. In view of the important implications of that joint statement for advancing the multilateral arms control process as well as the work of the Conference, the Chinese and Russian delegations recently requested the Conference secretariat to distribute it as an official document of the Conference. I should like at this point to provide a brief overview of the joint statement's content.

The leaders of China and Russia attach great importance to safeguarding international and regional strategic balance and stability. In their joint statement, they note that factors negatively affecting global strategic stability are increasing; some countries and military-political alliances are seeking decisive advantage in the military and military-technology fields in order to use military force to serve their own interests in international affairs. This is destabilizing the global strategic stability system and runs counter to the concept of implementing universal and comprehensive disarmament under effective control.

The two leaders emphasize that, in seeking to gain military superiority, some countries and alliances are stubbornly refusing to discuss reducing and limiting the weapons that guarantee the decisive military advantage they enjoy, which is an important contributing factor to the breakdown in global strategic balance and stability. Developments in the anti-missile field are also alarming, with the unilateral development and deployment of strategic anti-missile systems that negatively impact international and regional strategic balance, security and stability.

China and Russia strongly oppose the deployment by extraregional Powers, on the pretext of illusory fears, of the Aegis Ashore land-based missile system in Europe and the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system in the Asia-Pacific region. The development and manufacture of the Prompt Global Strike system and other such long-range precision strike weapons could also seriously damage strategic balance and stability.

There is an increasing threat that outer space will be weaponized and transformed into a region of military conflict, along with the danger that non-State actors will procure chemical and biological weapons for the purpose of committing acts of terrorism and violent extremism. The drafting by the Conference on Disarmament of a legally binding international agreement ensuring the non-weaponization of outer space, on the basis of the Sino-Russian draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, as well as negotiations on a draft agreement prohibiting chemical and biological terrorism, are thus of major relevance.

The two leaders also point out that arms control is an important means of strengthening international security and stability. Any measures taken in this area must abide by the basic principles established in the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978. Those principles continue to be fully relevant. Disarmament and arms control should be fair and balanced, and should consolidate the security of every country. Strategic stability is not a purely military concept in the field of nuclear weapons; the international community needs to consider strategic stability more broadly in the general context of international relations.

Accordingly, in the political sphere, all countries and groups of countries should scrupulously abide by the purposes and principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations regarding the use of military force and coercive measures, respect the legitimate rights and interests of all countries and peoples when resolving international and regional hot-spot issues, and oppose interference in the political affairs of other countries.

In the military sphere, all countries must maintain their military power at the lowest level necessary to ensure their national security; refrain from any actions which may be perceived by other members of the international community as threats to their own national security and thus cause them to restore the damaged balance by means of such countermeasures as building up their militaries and establishing or expanding military-political alliances; and bolster mutual trust and cooperation by resolving conflicts through positive and constructive dialogue.

These principles are aimed at consolidating world peace, security and stability. China and Russia jointly appeal to all members of the international community to use them as the basis for their actions, and stand ready to strengthen dialogue, cooperation and exchanges with the international community on that foundation.

The President: I thank the representative of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Denis Davydov.

Mr. Davydov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I would first of all like to say that the Russian Federation is prepared to keep working to break the deadlock at the Conference on Disarmament. We stand ready to support your efforts in this regard. I would also like to welcome the new Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations Office and other international organizations at Geneva to the Conference and to wish her every success in her work and assure her of our willingness to work together with her.

Today, together with our colleagues from China, we are presenting to the Conference on Disarmament, as an official document under the symbol CD/2066, the joint statement of the President of the Russian Federation and the President of the People's Republic of China on strengthening global strategic stability, signed in Beijing on 25 June 2016. Mr. Fu Cong, the Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China, has already spoken in this connection. For our part, we would like to add a few words.

In recent years, supporting strategic stability has taken on new urgency. It is clearly now of interest to our Conference, whose negotiations have remained blocked to a great extent as many States are uncertain that their security will be duly guaranteed. There has been an obvious loss of confidence, and factors adversely affecting global strategic stability have been on the rise.

Certain States and military-political blocs have made alarming attempts to obtain military and technical supremacy. In our view, the development of a global anti-missile defence system and of prompt global strike systems and other long-range, high-precision weapons capable of rapidly reaching targets at any point on Earth are examples of such attempts.

We believe that the threat of weapons appearing in space cannot be ignored. It is for this reason that the Russian Federation and China believe that it is a priority task for the Conference on Disarmament to draw up a legally binding international agreement to ensure that outer space remains free of weaponry. The Russian-Chinese draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space might serve as a basis. An interim

step could be the assumption by States of political commitments not to be the first to deploy weapons in outer space.

The risk that weapons of mass destruction might fall into the hands of terrorists presents another threat to international security. The Russian initiative for our Conference to draw up an international convention to combat attacks of chemical and biological terrorism is aimed at addressing this threat and has received delegations' widespread support.

The joint Russian-Chinese statement is intended to draw the attention of the international community once again to these and other problems of international security. We would ask that all partners give serious consideration to the concerns it raises and to take the appropriate steps so as to avoid — through joint efforts — any further worsening of an already complex situation in the world.

We should like to emphasize especially that we consider it fundamentally wrong for the matter of strategic stability to be addressed solely in the context of relations between the nuclear States. A breakdown of the current, fragile balance could seriously undermine the security of all States, without exception. Avoiding this is in everyone's interest.

The President: I thank the representative of Russia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. Now I would like to give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Rowland.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Mr. President, I too would like to welcome the new Ambassador of South Africa.

I want to draw the attention of member States to a vote in my country's Parliament that took place last month while the Conference on Disarmament was not in session. On 18 July, the House of Commons voted on a motion put forward by the Government concerning the nuclear deterrent of the United Kingdom. Members of the House, all democratically elected, voted 472 to 117 in support of that motion. The motion had various elements but included a request for Parliament's support for:

- The Government's assessment in the 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review that the independent minimum credible nuclear deterrent of the United Kingdom based on a continuous at-sea deterrence posture will remain essential to the country's security today as it has for over 60 years, and for as long as the global security situation demands, to deter the most extreme threats to the national security and way of life of the United Kingdom and that of its allies;
- Secondly, the decision to take the necessary steps required to maintain the current posture by replacing the current Vanguard-class submarines with four Successor submarines;
- And thirdly, the Government's commitment to continue work towards a safer and more stable world, pressing for key steps towards multilateral nuclear disarmament.

I would like to explain those three elements in more detail because they are relevant to the positions we take here at the Conference, within the United Nations disarmament machinery and on disarmament and arms control issues more generally.

First, then, is the need to maintain the nuclear deterrent of the United Kingdom. The unpredictable international security environment we face today demands the maintenance of our nuclear deterrent for the foreseeable future. Other States continue to have nuclear arsenals and there is a risk of further proliferation of nuclear weapons. There is a risk that States might use their nuclear capability to threaten us, try to constrain our decision-making in a crisis or sponsor nuclear terrorism. Recent changes in the international security context remind us that we cannot rule out further shifts which would put us, or our North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies, under grave threat. In the past few years, there has been a disturbing increase in both Russian rhetoric about the use of nuclear weapons and the frequency of snap nuclear exercises.

There is a threat from countries that are actively seeking to acquire nuclear capabilities illegally. North Korea has stated a clear intent to develop and deploy a nuclear weapon, and it continues to work towards that goal in flagrant violation of a series of United Nations Security Council resolutions. And there is a question of further proliferation leading to nuclear threats in the future that we cannot anticipate today. The decision on whether to maintain a nuclear deterrent hinges not just on the threats we face today but on an assessment of what the world will be like over the coming decades.

Our nuclear deterrent has helped keep the peace between the major Powers for decades. Abandoning it unilaterally would undermine our security and that of our allies; it would not make us safer. As the great nuclear theorist Sir Michael Quinlan once wrote: “No safer system than deterrence is yet in view and impatience would be a catastrophic guide in the search. To tear down the present structure, imperfect but in fact effective, before a better one is firmly within our grasp would be an immensely dangerous and irresponsible act.”

Maintaining our nuclear deterrent is not just essential for our own national security, it is vital for the future security of our NATO allies. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance. The strategic forces of the alliance — particularly those of the United States — are the supreme guarantee of the security of the allies. The independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France have a deterrent role of their own and contribute to the overall security alliance, not least through providing separate centres of decision-making which complicate the calculations of any potential adversaries.

Next, I would like to stress that the replacement of the four submarines is necessary to maintain the current posture of our nuclear deterrent. I want to emphasize that this is about maintaining our existing deterrent. This is not an upgrade of our capabilities. The United Kingdom Parliament voted overwhelmingly to retain the minimum credible deterrent of the United Kingdom with a submarine continuously at sea. Nor does the vote change the salience of nuclear weapons in our security doctrine. Deterrence draws upon the full spectrum of our capabilities: diplomacy, economic policy, law enforcement, offensive cyber, covert means and, of course, our armed forces. We would employ our nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances of self-defence, including the defence of our NATO allies. And we continue to offer the assurance that the United Kingdom will not use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear weapon State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This assurance does not apply to any State in material breach of those non-proliferation obligations and, while there is currently no direct threat to the United Kingdom or its vital interests from States developing weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical and biological capabilities, we reserve the right to review this assurance if the future threat, development or proliferation of these weapons makes it necessary.

Finally, let me come to the Government’s restated commitment to disarmament. Britain is committed to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons in line with our obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We play a leading role on disarmament verification, together with Norway and America. We will continue to press for key steps towards multilateral disarmament, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and for successful negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Furthermore, we are committed to retaining only the minimum amount of destructive power needed to deter any aggressor. We have cut our nuclear stockpiles by over half since the cold war peak in the late 1970s. Last year, we delivered on our 2010 commitment to reduce the number of deployed warheads on each submarine from 48 to 40. We will retain no more than 120 operationally available warheads and we will further reduce our stockpile of nuclear weapons to no more than 180 warheads by the middle of the next decade.

We remain determined to continue to work with partners across the international community to prevent proliferation and to make progress on multilateral nuclear disarmament — as I hope our efforts here this year have already demonstrated — and to

build trust and confidence between States and to take tangible steps towards a safer and more stable world in which countries with nuclear weapons feel able to relinquish them.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement and now I give the floor to the representative of the United States, Ambassador Wood.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, let me first welcome the new South African Ambassador. My delegation and I look forward to working with you and your delegation to try to get this distinguished body back to work.

I am taking the floor, Mr. President, just to respond to a number of points that were made this morning. On the issue of strategic stability that was raised by the Permanent Representative of China, President Obama has maintained for quite some time that the United States is committed to a relationship of strategic stability with China and supports dialogue on nuclear policy aimed at fostering a more stable, resilient and open security relationship with China. Developing a common understanding of the meaning of strategic stability in the multilateral context provides an intellectual framework for managing the risks associated with weapons systems capable of achieving strategic effects. Our ability to successfully manage risk and differences in this area must be underpinned by such a framework.

On the issue of ballistic missile defence, let me just say that United States ballistic missile defence programmes are defensive in nature. The United States has been open and transparent with China and Russia on why our planned missile defence programmes will not threaten the strategic security of China and Russia. United States ballistic missile defence programmes are designed and scaled for relatively unsophisticated threats from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran and not Russian or Chinese intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that possess advanced countermeasures.

Our regional missile defence deployments are in response to the threat to peace and stability posed to our allies, partners and our homeland by the proliferation of increasingly sophisticated and lethal ballistic missiles potentially armed with weapons of mass destruction. These regional missile defences are tailored to the specific ballistic and nuclear missile threats from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and will not impact the strategic deterrent of Russia or China or cause instability. Instead, the United States missile defence programmes enhance regional stability by countering the coercive power of ballistic missiles and especially those potentially armed with weapons of mass destruction. In response to the threat from North Korea, the United States and the Republic of Korea in early February began formal consultations regarding the feasibility of deploying to the Republic of Korea the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system as a measure to improve the missile defence posture of the alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea. Based on these joint consultations, the United States and the Republic of Korea made an alliance decision on 8 July to deploy the THAAD system to the Republic of Korea as a purely defensive measure to protect the security of the Republic of Korea and its people from armed attack and to protect alliance military forces from weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile threats from North Korea.

We will continue to take prudent steps in the face of these threats. Russia and China should focus on the full implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 2270 (2016) to pressure the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to credible negotiations on denuclearization.

I would like to just make a comment on the Aegis Ashore programme. The sites in Romania and Poland are in the optimal locations to defend the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Europe against missile threats from outside the Euro-Atlantic region. What we are doing is basically what we said we would do. The alliance decided to develop the ballistic missile defence capability of NATO at the Lisbon Summit in 2010 and it has been building the system in a transparent way ever since. In order to promote trust, the United States and NATO have been and continue to be clear and open about the system's capabilities.

My last point, Mr. President, is back on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I want to make sure my Government is on record here as strongly condemning the 19 July

and recent missile tests of North Korea which violate United Nations Security Council resolutions explicitly prohibiting launches by North Korea using ballistic missile technology. These provocations only serve to increase the international community's resolve to counter prohibited activities by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including through implementing existing Security Council sanctions. Multiple Security Council resolutions require the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile programme.

We intend to raise our concerns at the United Nations to bolster international resolve in holding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea accountable for these provocative actions that threaten international peace and security. Our commitment to the defence of our allies, including the Republic of Korea and Japan, in the face of these threats remains ironclad. We remain prepared to work with our allies and partners around the world to respond to further provocations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as well as to defend ourselves and our allies from any attack. We call on North Korea to refrain from actions that further raise tensions in the region and to focus instead on taking concrete steps towards fulfilling its international obligations and commitments.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim In-chul (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, I would like to join others in welcoming the new South African Ambassador. We look forward to working closely together with her.

If I remember correctly, on 28 June, which was the last Tuesday plenary meeting of this body in June, a number of countries pointed out the unacceptable behaviour of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, they did it again on 19 July. Therefore, I cannot help but condemn in the strongest of terms the successive launches of missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. They constitute a flagrant violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions, and they are acts of provocation threatening peace and security in the region that have to be ceased immediately. Therefore, we believe that the international community is and has to stand united to put an end to such provocations by implementing all relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Republic of Korea for its part is taking and will take all warranted and legitimate measures, including defensive military measures.

The President: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I recognize the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Jo Chol-su (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, I did not have the intention to take the floor today but, given the distorted arguments and groundless allegations we have just heard concerning the military activities conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I wish to exercise the right of reply in this regard.

Let me first make clear our position with respect to the remarks made by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom. In mid-July, the British Prime Minister made mention of the so-called potential nuclear threat from countries such as the Russian Federation and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea ahead of the vote in Parliament on the plan for building the latest strategic nuclear submarine. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea made clear its position on this, so let me briefly touch on this issue. It is quite a pity that the United Kingdom makes excuses for building a nuclear submarine by finding fault with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, thousands of kilometres away from the United Kingdom. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom had fought in the 1950s — for the United Kingdom dispatched troops to the Korean War — but the Democratic People's Republic of Korea does not regard it as an enemy, as they established diplomatic relations based on mutual respect and equality. Therefore, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea does not regard the nuclear weapons of the United Kingdom as a threat to it and, therefore, the United Kingdom has no need to regard nuclear weapons of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a direct threat to the United Kingdom.

If the United Kingdom is in need of nuclear weapons for protecting its present and future generations or is in need of a justification for its nuclear doctrine, then it can do that without bringing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea into question. Contrary to what was mentioned by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea also possesses nuclear deterrence in order to defend itself — from the extreme and potential threat of nuclear war by the United States. Therefore, as already clarified several times in this chamber, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to bolster its self-defensive nuclear deterrence to protect the sovereignty of the country and the vital rights of the nation.

Let me also address the points made by the United States and South Korea with respect to the missile launch conducted by the People's Army of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Whenever, as a just measure for defence, military exercises or the launch of missiles are carried out, the United States and its allies always call this a violation of resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and a provocation. The United States has to look at the fact that it is posing a great threat to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with nuclear weapons, having brought to South Korea all types of strategic assets. The unceasing arms build-up and nuclear war drills of the United States are real threats to the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula and a wanton violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. This is an intolerable provocation against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The United States, having adopted an anachronistic hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and also with its strategies for world supremacy, seeks to turn the Korean Peninsula into the theatre of a thermonuclear war and thus implement its aggressive "pivot to the Asia-Pacific" strategy in real earnest. The United States officially decided to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system in South Korea to achieve this objective. The United States is seeking to retain its military edge in Asia-Pacific and realize its ambition for dominating the region by staging aggressive war drills, with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as its primary target, and stepping up the arms build-up and creation of a military bloc. Due to such sabre-rattling by the United States, peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and in the region are seriously threatened and the danger of nuclear war is becoming a reality. As already mentioned, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will never remain a passive onlooker to the moves by the United States to plunge the Peninsula into a nuclear disaster but will take stronger countermeasures to defend the sovereignty and dignity of the country and the nation and the peace of the region and the world.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Shindo (Japan): Mr. President, my delegation also welcomes the new Ambassador of South Africa.

I wish to echo the statements made by the Ambassadors of the United States and the Republic of Korea regarding the recent ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during the recess of the Conference on Disarmament. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea once again conducted a series of missile launches, including on 19 July, which not only constitute a clear violation of relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2270 (2016), but also are provocations that undermine the peace and security of the region and international community, including Japan. Therefore, we strongly condemn the launches and urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions and other international commitments without taking further provocative actions.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan for his statement and now give the floor to the Ambassador of Spain.

Mr. Herráiz España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, Spain too wishes to extend a friendly welcome to the new Ambassador of South Africa, with whom we look forward to establishing a relationship of trust.

I would like to take the floor very briefly by virtue of my country's status as the current Chair of the Security Council Sanctions Committee on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I wish simply to recall my country's responsibility in respect of this mandate, which is none other than to ensure the proper implementation of resolutions of the Security Council. Again, the mandate does not relate directly to the responsibilities of individual countries that are being held accountable for a given situation: rather, this is a multilateral matter that involves the entire international community. Accordingly, the issue of non-compliance with these resolutions of the Security Council relates to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and not to other countries that have been the object of inappropriate accusations.

The President: I thank the Ambassador for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I recognize the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Jo Chol-su (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I apologize, Mr. President, for asking for the floor again. I will try to be as brief as possible but, before I turn to the point made by some delegations just now, allow me to join others in welcoming the Ambassador of South Africa and assuring her delegation of our full support and collaboration in the future.

I wish to touch just briefly on the remarks made by the Japanese and Spanish delegations. This is not the first time that there have been repeated references to the so-called provocative activities conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. As I mentioned in my reply last June, I would like to ask those countries that are about to side with the United States, if possible, to take an unbiased stand with a clear understanding of the nature of the situation and contribute to ensuring peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and in the rest of the world.

There are some countries who want to take advantage of the tense situation in the Korean Peninsula in order to realize their ambitions, especially for militarization and also to benefit from aggravating the already dangerous situation in the Korean Peninsula. I think this kind of activities or moves would not contribute to easing the tension in the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, it is highly recommendable to look into the real cause — and I mean the root cause — of the issue in the Korean Peninsula and take an unbiased stand in order to truly contribute to world peace and security, including in the Korean Peninsula.

The President: I thank you for your statement and now I would like to give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. McConville (Australia): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by welcoming the Ambassador of South Africa as she commences her new assignment.

Mr. President, my delegation also made an intervention on 28 June on the issue of the missile testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In light of the further testing that occurred on 19 July, we would like to underline, yet again, our concern at the strategy adopted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its impact on regional security. We urge the implementation of the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

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

This concludes our meeting for today. Our next formal plenary meeting will be on Thursday, 4 August 2016, at 10 a.m., in the Council Chamber. Also, as I mentioned earlier, we will meet next Tuesday, 9 August 2016, at 10 a.m., for an informal plenary meeting in the Council Chamber. This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.