

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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**Final record of the one thousand five hundred and twenty-fifth plenary meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 28 January 2020, at 10.15 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Rachid Belbaki ..... (Algeria)

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**The President** (*spoke in French*): I call to order the 1525th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ms. Valovaya, before beginning with the day's business, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to a new colleague who has taken up his duties since the end of the 2019 session: Mr. Hashmi, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations Office at Geneva. On behalf of my own Government and on behalf of the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of our full cooperation and support as you carry out your new assignments.

I would also like to inform you that during our work this morning I intend to proceed as follows: first, to consider the requests of non-member States to participate in the work of the Conference as observers and then to hear a statement by Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Secretary-General of the Conference in her capacity as Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Thereafter, I will give the floor to the delegations on the list of speakers, suspend the formal meeting and proceed to an informal setting. When our informal discussion is over, I will resume the formal meeting.

I would now like the Conference to consider the requests of non-member States to participate in the work of the Conference received as of yesterday, Monday, 27 January 2020, at 3 p.m. They are contained in document CD/WP.625, which has been made available to you. Any requests from non-member States received after the date indicated above will be presented for your consideration and decision at future plenary meetings. May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

*It was so decided.*

**The President** (*spoke in French*): Allow me to suspend the meeting for a moment to allow the representatives of the non-member States who have just been invited to participate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament to take their seats in the Council Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President** (*spoke in French*): Ladies and gentlemen, at this meeting, we will first hear a statement given by the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres. I then intend to give the floor to the representatives and Ambassadors of the Russian Federation, Morocco, Pakistan, Egypt, Belgium, Sri Lanka, Finland, Switzerland, the United States of America, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Germany. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to give the floor to Ms. Tatiana Valovaya.

**Ms. Valovaya** (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): Thank you, Mr. President. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my honour to read out the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

Our world entered 2020 with uncertainty and insecurity all around. One of the most significant drivers of this unease is – to put it bluntly – the atrophying state of our disarmament instruments, institutions and aspirations.

Landmark arms control instruments that maintained stability and created the conditions for reduced reliance on nuclear weapons have been abandoned. New arms competition is quickly filling the void.

In the absence of strengthened regimes for building trust and confidence, dangerous flashpoints are emerging. Meanwhile, new weapons technologies are moving forward with unclear or possibly destabilizing applications.

All these troubling developments undermine peace. And they are among the driving factors behind my decision two years ago to launch Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament.

Since then, United Nations entities have worked to advance this agenda and forge new partnerships. A number of Member States have stepped forward to champion or support specific actions.

Yet it is clear that much more must be done to overcome deep divisions that contribute to, among other things, the paralysis that has crippled this body for the past two decades.

That is why I am actively exploring what more the United Nations can do to contribute to a new vision for disarmament. I look forward to engaging with you in this endeavour in the months ahead. Such an approach could lay the groundwork for a new consensus on collectively improving the international situation. It would also make a practical contribution to a long overdue revitalization of this body and its agenda.

We do not have a moment to lose. In recent times, we have seen the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the precarious state of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the uncertainty surrounding the fate of the New START.

Our world simply cannot afford to lose pillars of the international disarmament and arms control architecture without viable alternatives.

The Conference on Disarmament was established to serve as the premier international negotiating body for solving hard questions of arms and security.

The delegations assembled here represent some of the best expertise in international security and disarmament. It is only natural that you should be at the forefront of the strategic dialogue our world needs to secure our common future.

I am encouraged by the increasing partnership and collaboration among the Presidents of the Conference. I hope your active leadership brings this Conference back to its original purpose in 2020.

Thank you very much for your attention.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Valovaya for her statement on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and for the kind words for the Conference on Disarmament and the President. I would now like to turn to today's list of speakers.

The first delegation on the list is the delegation of the Russian Federation. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Gatilov** (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, Ms. Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, distinguished colleagues, first of all I would like to congratulate Algeria on its assumption of the presidency of the Conference in 2020. I hope that you and all the six Presidents will achieve significant progress on the work of our forum. You can count on our full support and cooperation.

We note with regret the deterioration of the current international security situation. Tensions and unpredictability are mounting, old threats are growing and new challenges are emerging, and the military and political factors that undermine international stability are gaining ground. All this is taking place against the backdrop of a breakdown of the existing system of agreements on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

Given the current state of affairs, the role of the United Nations disarmament machinery and its linchpin, the Conference on Disarmament, in this crucial area of international security is increasing many times over. Only this mechanism makes it possible to take into account the positions of all countries on the basis of strict adherence to the principles of multilateralism and guarantees of equal and indivisible security for all States and also to use the rule of consensus to develop effective and viable legally binding agreements in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

Last week, we adopted an agenda for the Conference containing the most important international security issues. In so doing, States parties committed themselves to making full use of the Geneva platform and its mandate for their full consideration.

As realists, we are aware of the difficulties to be overcome in order to make it possible for the substantive work of the Conference to begin, including the possibility of

resuming the negotiation process. However, we are determined to make every effort, in close cooperation with other delegations, the six Presidents of the session, the secretariat of the Conference, the Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Secretary-General of the Conference, to overcome differences and work towards a convergence of positions on both specific agenda items and the organization of the work of the Conference.

We encourage States parties to work together to resume negotiations at the Conference and to adopt a constructive position in the consideration of the agenda items in the light of the responsibility that falls to us for maintaining peace and strengthening international security. We have all the more reason to do so because there is a good basis for starting negotiations on certain issues. The Conference on Disarmament has before it an updated Russian and Chinese 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 and elements of a possible convention for the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism. We believe that both the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the prevention of terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction deserve increased attention from the Conference, and given the preparatory work done, they are well ripe for negotiation.

We support the continuation of in-depth discussions on all seven agenda items. At the same time, we, like the other participants in the Conference on Disarmament, believe that there is no need for talking for talking's sake. Discussion of any issue on the agenda should be constructive and bring us closer to fulfilling the mandate and objectives of the Conference: conducting negotiations to come up with new legally binding instruments in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. In that regard, we believe that the experience of the 2018 session on the establishment of subsidiary bodies is useful. However, we should analyse it carefully in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the discussions in the newly established subsidiary bodies.

We do not share the opinion of those who would content themselves with developing and approving a set of standards and rules, codes of conduct or best practices of some kind.

I would like to stress that all the positive experience gained confirms that there is no alternative to consolidating the agreements reached in the form of legally binding agreements that leave no scope for arbitrary interpretation or for disregarding their provisions. Treaties must be respected, because there was political will when they were being drafted. No arrangements of a voluntary nature will be as binding. It need hardly be said that the current international security architecture is based on treaties as the main sources of law. We see no reason to change that state of affairs.

We support the initiative of the six Presidents to work together to ensure continuity during the session. At the same time, we hope that the new arrangement will not lend itself to wilful approaches or impose a position developed within a narrow framework, but rather lead to close cooperation with delegations to take into account both national and group approaches.

We have no objection in principle to considering the working methods of the Conference at any stage of the current session, although we believe that our forum has the necessary tools to overcome differences and work effectively. Observers are important to the work of the Conference in this regard. Through participation as observers, any State may contribute to the discussion and address pressing issues on the Conference agenda. We believe that, like the work of the Conference itself, observers should be protected from discriminatory approaches dictated by national policies. In that connection, the position of Turkey on the application of Cyprus for observer status is regrettable. Russia has consistently opposed the politicization of any issue in the Conference on Disarmament, whether substantive or procedural, and hopes that its Turkish colleagues will withdraw their objections to the participation of Cyprus in the work of the Conference. Such a step is fully consistent with the principles of multilateralism and the sovereign equality of States and with the spirit of cooperation that underpins the work of our distinguished forum.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and for his kind words for the President. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Morocco.

**Mr. Zniber** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President, Madam Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and distinguished colleagues. Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of our Conference and to wish you success in your presidency, which is unfolding in a fragile, volatile and complex international security context.

In our humble opinion, coming up with the appropriate responses to this deadlock we have been mired in for nearly a quarter of a century and to our inability to adopt a programme of work or, above all, further normative negotiations in the field of disarmament and arms control requires a frank and lucid assessment of the Conference on Disarmament. In the context of this essential exercise, *Securing Our Common Future*, the Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, could, as we have already stressed, be an important tool insofar as it is a response to the deterioration of international security characterized by the resurgence of tension and threats of a breach of the peace, as was forcefully and eloquently brought home this morning by the Secretary-General of our Conference in the statement she made on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

This fundamentally comprehensive initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General, which covers several facets of the Conference's spheres of action, is concerned both with disarmament aspects as such and with the impact on civilian populations of technological development and new forms of armed confrontation. That said, it is clearly not easy to reconcile political reality and the security imperative with humanitarian responsibility, as we have unfortunately seen for quite some time in our debates in this Conference. We should therefore all work to achieve our aspirations for a more stable and secure world. Lofty words aside, it must be stressed once again that it is precisely these difficulties that show how necessary it is – if common ground capable of reinvigorating this body, which is still the sole multilateral body for the negotiation of legal instruments on disarmament, is to be found – for member States to make a firm commitment to displaying creativity, imagination and, above all, political will.

Mr. President, Madam Secretary-General, if our predecessors managed to negotiate multilateral agreements in the main areas of disarmament, which are today the cornerstone of the security and disarmament system, and which, as a young diplomat, I had the honour to help put together more than a quarter of a century ago on behalf of my country, let us be the ones who manage to break the deadlock of two decades. To that end, trust and political will, as I have already mentioned, are the keys to giving new life and meaning to this body and enabling it to fulfil its mandate through consensus, which is itself a guarantee of respect for the democratic principles that underpin our activities. In this respect, it is necessary to work collectively towards the adoption of a consensual programme of work that can be followed, thus enabling the Conference to regain its significant place on the international disarmament scene.

Mr. President, Madam Secretary-General, I would like to note again that the Kingdom of Morocco expressed its views on the method to be used for the adoption of such a programme of work when, as early as last year, it supported the draft submitted at the 2019 session. Adopting a programme of work, it seems to us, is crucial, but negotiating on all the items on our agenda is even more crucial. To that end, naturally, we must not question others' motives; rather, we must be pragmatic in the face of the challenges facing the international community in respect of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of new-generation weapons, which are a matter of serious concern not only to States and Governments but also to civil society.

Before concluding, Mr. President, I would simply like to stress once again that, despite all these difficulties and all this obstruction, the Conference on Disarmament – a body that cannot be overlooked and an indispensable forum for the community of nations that wish to promote peace, security and understanding in respect of the crucial issues that we have been discussing – has demonstrated its staying power and resilience. Thank you.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Morocco for his statement and for his kind words for the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan.

**Mr. Hashmi** (Pakistan): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me begin by congratulating you on assuming the first presidency of this year's session of the Conference on

Disarmament. We welcome the consultative, transparent and cooperative manner in which you are fulfilling your responsibilities. You can rest assured of our full cooperation.

We deeply appreciate the support provided by the secretariat, ably led by Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and her remarkable team. I also thank Ms. Valovaya for her thoughtful remarks today.

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the warm words of welcome by you, Mr. President, and all other delegations as Pakistan's new Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Ambassador to the Conference. I consider it a great honour and privilege to represent my country in this august body. I look forward to working with all delegations and count on your support and cooperation.

Mr. President, Pakistan views the Conference as a vital organ of the multilateral security architecture, the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating body and an indispensable part of the United Nations disarmament machinery. We attach very high importance to the Conference and remain committed to its effective functioning. This is a unique forum where all militarily significant States participate on an equal footing to address a multitude of issues for the promotion of peace and stability through arms control and disarmament.

We are presently witnessing a significant shift in the global security dynamics. Certain countries are becoming increasingly focused on preserving or enhancing their military dominance at the cost of others' security. Such a posture and approach obviously have a direct bearing on multilateral arms control machinery, especially the Conference.

Double standards, discrimination and selectivity continue to shape the policies of some major States, thereby eroding long-standing global non-proliferation norms and a rules-based international order. While novel and sophisticated technologies are being swiftly transformed into new types of weapons and means and methods of warfare, the international regulations governing their use are lagging far behind.

In South Asia, one country continues to pursue a policy of establishing its hegemony. This is evidenced by several statements from people holding high office and recent actions such as the nuclearization of the Indian Ocean, the increase in the diversity, number, range and readiness of delivery vehicles for both conventional and nuclear weapons, the acquisition of anti-ballistic missiles and long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles and the demonstration of anti-satellite weapons capability.

The pursuit of domination in South Asia has in large measure been enabled by some States through their supply of advanced military hardware and sensitive technologies. In their pursuit of domination, strategic and commercial considerations have clearly trumped the imperatives of regional stability.

The discriminatory revisionism of the global order through country-specific waivers and exceptions is adding to regional instability in South Asia. These waivers have allowed the limited domestic uranium reserves of this country to be freed up for exclusive use in its strategic programme and a build-up of weapons-usable fissile material stockpiles. The cumulative effect of these generous supplies is the development of aggressive doctrines, a destabilizing accumulation of arms and a pervasive sense of impunity. The Defence Minister of this country explicitly questioned the declaratory policy of the "no first use" posture in his official capacity on 16 August 2019.

Mr. President, the unquestioned pursuit of a policy of domination, when combined with an acquired sense of impunity, has unleashed unprecedented dangers in South Asia. The obvious victims are the 8 million people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, who have been kept in the world's largest open prison for over five months by security forces over 800,000 strong.

The actions taken on 5 August 2019 constitute a deliberate defiance of international law and Security Council injunctions, since the principal aim of these actions is to alter the demographic composition of the occupied territory and to deny the Kashmiri people their inalienable right to self-determination.

These actions are illegal and unilateral, since they clearly violate the Security Council resolutions under which the Jammu and Kashmir issue remains an internationally recognized dispute. The final disposition can only be carried out through a United Nations–

supervised plebiscite. The policies and actions that I have just outlined above entail a grave danger to peace and security in South Asia and beyond.

Mr. President, Pakistan yearns for peace. Pakistan desires strategic stability. Pakistan wants to focus on its socioeconomic development agenda. We seek a normal, healthy relationship, based on sovereign equality and mutual respect, with all our neighbours and beyond. Pakistan, however, cannot remain oblivious to the evolving security dynamics in its immediate neighbourhood. We have been compelled to take the necessary measures to ensure our security and to credibly deter all forms of aggression. But our conduct continues to be defined by restraint and responsibility and the avoidance of an arms race.

Peace and stability in South Asia cannot be achieved without resolving the underlying disputes, without agreeing on reciprocal measures for nuclear and missile restraint and risk reduction and without instituting a balance between conventional forces through a sustained process of dialogue and confidence-building. Our proposal for establishing a strategic restraint regime in South Asia is geared towards achieving these objectives. But we lack a willing partner.

Pakistan remains open to any bilateral or multilateral initiative on arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament that is equitable and results in equal and undiminished security for all concerned States. It is unrealistic to aspire to absolute security and unrestrained freedom of action for oneself, while expecting others to compromise on their legitimate security interests.

Mr. President, the situation in the Conference is a reflection of the prevailing strategic realities. The blame for the impasse cannot be pinned on working methods, which successfully produced landmark instruments such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The Conference encompasses all relevant stakeholders, and its rules of procedure allow each member to safeguard its vital security interests – both essential prerequisites for concluding disarmament treaties.

Pakistan remains firmly committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons that is achieved in a universal, verifiable and non-discriminatory manner. Pakistan supports the commencement of negotiations towards that end in the Conference. As recognized at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the objective of that process should be undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces. Nuclear disarmament is not only the *raison d'être* of the Conference but also a clear priority of the international community.

Pakistan also supports the immediate start of negotiations in the Conference to conclude treaties on negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The latest developments add to the urgency of concluding such treaties. Following nuclear disarmament, the issues of negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space have been on the Conference agenda for the longest duration and are the most ripe for commencing negotiations.

Pakistan also stands ready to join substantive work in the Conference on legally binding instruments on other contemporary issues affecting international peace and security. These include chemical and biological terrorism, cyberwarfare, lethal autonomous weapons and other types of destabilizing weapon systems.

As for the issue of fissile material, Pakistan believes that a treaty which ignores the asymmetries in fissile material stocks would be detrimental to international and regional stability and adversely affect its national security. A treaty involving a cut-off only, as envisaged under the Shannon mandate, would make a marginal contribution to nuclear disarmament. It would serve only to freeze the status quo to the perpetual strategic advantage of a select few.

The asymmetries in our region are being further accentuated by the discriminatory policies of certain major nuclear suppliers. Pakistan, therefore, supports a fissile material treaty that covers existing stocks. It is high time to discard the outdated Shannon mandate and work towards developing a new basis for negotiations on a treaty whose scope expressly encompasses existing stocks and applies equally to all States without discrimination. A proposed treaty that is completely cost-free for its proponents, while being disproportionately detrimental to some, would remain a non-starter.

Mr. President, the reality in the Conference today is that there is no consensus on the commencement of negotiations on any issue on the Conference agenda. We can either sit idle and endlessly lament the deadlock or be pragmatic and move towards the next best alternative. We could productively utilize the forum for structured discussions on all agenda items in a balanced and comprehensive manner. Such discussions have been routinely held in the past under various formats and have contributed to the development of a better understanding of the various perspectives. Given their proven value for making incremental progress on the substantive issues, such structured discussions could be revived.

We thank you for the proposal for a draft programme of work. We will examine it with the seriousness that it deserves and will provide feedback in due course, after consultation with the capital. We will engage with this exercise in a positive spirit.

Mr. President, I would conclude by emphasizing that my delegation will continue to be an active and constructive participant in the work of the Conference. We fully recognize the benefits of cooperative multilateralism in the Conference and hope that we will soon commence work on substantive matters.

I thank you, Mr. President.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador for his statement and for his kind words for the President. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Egypt.

**Mr. Youssef** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and on the resumption by Algeria of the leadership of this forum more than ten years after the country's success, in 2009, in facilitating the adoption of the last programme to be agreed upon by member States. We are confident that your broad experience will enable you to manage this Conference in an excellent manner. I shall now proceed to speak in English.

(*spoke in English*)

Mr. President, this year marks several important milestones for multilateral diplomacy. From the seventy-fifth anniversary of the General Assembly to the fiftieth anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), 2020 should represent an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its collective commitment to multilateralism, most notably in the field of disarmament.

The beginning of the 2020 session of the Conference on Disarmament 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. The United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament stands as a vivid testament, as reiterated today by Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. Indeed, 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 existing architecture and developing new disarmament measures should be the key focus of the 2020 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 to negotiate legally binding disarmament instruments. It should be reinvigorated and empowered to fulfil its role, as envisaged at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The prolonged stalemate at the Conference should not persist and it certainly should not prevent us from doing our utmost to achieve a substantive breakthrough this year.

Mr. President, let me highlight, in this connection, Egypt's views on the top priorities of the work of the Conference this year.

First, Egypt attaches utmost importance to the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention in the Conference, which should ultimately aim at the complete and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time frame and under effective international verification and control. In this regard, nuclear disarmament remains the foremost priority that should be pursued in the implementation of article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We therefore expect any programme of work to include the establishment of a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament. Nuclear-



weapon States bear a special responsibility to implement their obligations on nuclear disarmament and to allow the commencement of negotiations without further delay.

In 2017, and for the first time since nuclear weapons were used, the General Assembly adopted a non-discriminatory legally binding treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, this achievement was concluded outside the Conference on Disarmament. Nevertheless, efforts to pursue this endeavour further should be conducted at the Conference by negotiating a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention.

Second, 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, in accordance with the report of the special coordinator (CD/1299) of 1995 and the mandate contained therein. 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 subverts the disarmament objective. The 13 practical steps adopted at the NPT Review Conference in 2000 included a call for the necessity of negotiating such a treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. Twenty years after the adoption of these steps, this call remains unheeded.

Third, 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 persists an urgent need to conclude a universal, unconditional and irrevocable legally binding instrument for effectively assuring non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under all circumstances.

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 mankind. 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 an arms race. Egypt has been submitting for years, alternately with Sri Lanka, a resolution to the General Assembly on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. A legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space is significant, especially taking into consideration the alarming trends on the possible weaponization of outer space and the development by several States of anti-satellite capabilities.

Mr. President, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and essential for strengthening international peace and security. It was this critical balance between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, in addition to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy that facilitated, in the first place, the adoption of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the grand bargain contained therein.

The Conference on Disarmament must live up to its mandate and commence negotiations on legally binding instruments on its four core agenda items. The persistence of deadlock in the Conference further erodes its mandate and could progressively lead to its demise.

Mr. President, for decades Egypt has been adamantly calling for and pursuing efforts towards the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In 2019, a momentous event took place, establishing a serious process with the aim of implementing the numerous international resolutions related to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. As mandated by the General Assembly in its decision 73/546, the United Nations Secretary-General convened a conference in November 2019 to elaborate a treaty on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The conference concluded its work successfully with the participation of 23 States from the region, in addition to China, France, Russia and the United Kingdom, as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency, a representative of the unit supporting the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, in addition to other observers, all of which actively participated in good faith in the conference.

The conference successfully adopted a balanced political declaration that reiterates its main objectives and reaffirms the inclusivity of this process and the good faith of the participants and its openness to the participation of the invited States that did not take part in the first session.

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

Mr. President, Egypt values your commitment to starting substantive work at the Conference on Disarmament. For its part, Egypt will strive throughout this year's session to work constructively with you and all members on the achievement of the objectives of the Conference, which are neither impossible to attain nor made inaccessible by any obstacles that cannot be overcome.

Before I conclude, Mr. President, in the opening session of the Conference last Tuesday, consensus was prevented on the request of Cyprus to participate as observer, a request that Egypt fully supports. We deeply regret that this request was rejected, and we hope to avoid the politicization of the Conference.

I thank you, Mr. President.

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the presidency.

(*spoke in French*)

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Belgium.

**Mr. Muylle** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Mr. President, allow me to wish you every success in your new position as President of the Conference on Disarmament as the year 2020 begins. You can count on my delegation's full support. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Ms. Valovaya, for her statement on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. My country shares his concerns about the current geopolitical tensions on the international scene and supports his call to revitalize the Conference.

As we reiterated last week, the Conference on Disarmament plays a central role as the single multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations and, as such, it is important for the Conference to return immediately to functioning as the driving force behind the disarmament activities we are discussing and to redouble its efforts to adopt a programme of work this year. In this regard, Mr. President, I thank you for the non-paper you circulated yesterday evening. We will consider it very carefully. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the European Union and would like to add some remarks in a national capacity.

For my country, it is fundamental for the work of the Conference on Disarmament to be inclusive, transparent and open to observer States not yet members of the Conference. In this respect, we deeply regret the decision by Turkey to veto the granting of observer status to Cyprus. We urge Turkey to reconsider its decision.

This year, the year of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, my country reaffirms its commitment to that Treaty, which is the cornerstone of our nuclear weapons policy and an irreplaceable bulwark against the risks of nuclear proliferation. It must therefore be not only preserved but also strengthened. The Treaty is a collective endeavour. While each of us benefits from it, the fact is that we also share the responsibility for making it work and for ensuring that the objective set out in article VI in particular is achieved. In this regard, it is crucial this year for all to make a renewed political commitment to the objectives of the Treaty. We therefore call on all States to transmit in due course the national reports through which they inform the States parties of the efforts they have made to implement the 2010 action plan. Such action would demonstrate the commitment of each State to achieving the objectives of the Treaty.

In an international security environment characterized by the modernization and renewal of nuclear capabilities, it is also important to build confidence. Negative security

assurances are an example of important confidence-building measures and should be one of the clear benefits of adherence to the Treaty as long as the total elimination of all nuclear weapons is out of tangible reach.

Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament has a crucial role to play in nuclear disarmament. My country is firmly committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, an objective that must be achieved by degrees. Such a gradual approach involves mutually reinforcing elements. There have been recent initiatives to relaunch components of this approach, which has been stalled for years, particularly the goal of concluding a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We call for the immediate commencement of negotiations for the adoption of a treaty in the Conference on Disarmament.

Belgium attaches particular importance to an international order based on the rule of law and to the indispensable role played by transparent and verifiable instruments – the role played in Euro-Atlantic security over the past 30 years by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, for example. We regret that this Treaty could not be preserved and are concerned about the negative impact of a world without it on our collective security. We encourage the Russian Federation and the United States of America to work to reduce their nuclear arsenals and to strengthen confidence-building, transparency and verification measures. We call on these parties to begin, as soon as possible, an active dialogue for the renewal of the New START in 2021.

Mr. President, my country welcomes the work done last year by the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament and voluntary initiatives such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, of which my country is a member. Last September, Belgium organized a two-week measurement campaign at its national nuclear research centre. The objective of this campaign was to test a measurement method to distinguish between plutonium intended for nuclear weapons and plutonium intended for civilian purposes.

The relevance and importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty were once again demonstrated by the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Condemning such illegal and provocative detonations does not suffice. We need a legally binding and universal standard and an internationally recognized and effective verification mechanism. There is only one instrument that can guarantee a complete ban on nuclear tests and there is only one instrument that can detect hidden tests. There is thus no alternative to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and no short cut to a denuclearized world. Such a world will require the entry into force of this Treaty.

My country reaffirms its full support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The Plan of Action is still relevant and must be preserved. It is clear that it is yielding concrete results and that it is important to continue to work to ensure that it is fully implemented. My country regrets the withdrawal of the United States from the Plan of Action. Belgium also calls on Iran to roll back the measures taken in breach of the Plan of Action and return to the path of compliance. In this regard, we encourage the parties to the Plan of Action to engage in a constructive dialogue within the framework of the Plan's dispute resolution mechanism.

Belgium has put itself forward as a candidate to preside over the Nuclear Suppliers Group for the period 2020/21. This presidency will begin with a plenary meeting in Brussels in late June 2020. It reflects both our commitment to the multilateral non-proliferation framework and our readiness to share burdens. My country will also have the honour of presiding over the work of the Security Council in February. Among other things, we will hold a briefing on the subject of small arms and light weapons in the presence of the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Nakamitsu.

Finally, Mr. President, Belgium will have the honour of presiding over the work of this Conference in January 2021. We will begin preparations for this presidency at the end of this year, in close cooperation with the six Presidents of the next session, with whom we look forward to working. In this regard, as you are well aware, we are already following with interest the work of the six Presidents of the current session, in which we are participating as observers. Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Belgium for his statement and for his kind words for the President. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Sri Lanka.

**Mr. Azeez** (Sri Lanka): First of all, let me convey Sri Lanka's best wishes to you on your assumption of the presidency of this important forum. Algeria being the last presidency to have succeeded, over a decade ago, in building consensus on a programme of work, it is our fervent hope that your presidency will pave the way for that long-awaited breakthrough in the Conference on Disarmament: namely, the beginning of serious and committed negotiations on the core issues on its agenda.

We also welcome, with much optimism, the coordinated approach that the six Presidents of the year have taken with regard to steering the work of the Conference and appreciate the commitment expressed in their joint statement to having an open dialogue with all member States with a view to arriving at an early decision on a programme of work. Please be assured, Mr. President and dear colleagues, of Sri Lanka's consistent and ready support for the efforts that you all envisage to undertake towards building consensus and creating momentum in the Conference.

We thank Madam Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General, for sharing the thoughts and expectations of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the way forward. Let me also extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan's Permanent Representative.

Mr. President, nearly twenty-eight years ago, as a young diplomat in Geneva, I followed with zeal how the Conference began to deliver on its mandate by setting new legal standards on global arms control and disarmament. The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty helped us to keep up with rapid advances in technology and evolving security challenges. It is true that the Conference has been more or less at an impasse since then, with its proceedings remaining mostly deliberative since 1996. Yet, today, even as I get ready to conclude my assignment as the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, over two decades on, I still believe that the Conference has the potential to deliver more effectively on its mandate. But as we have seen for several years now, it would be possible only if we intended in good faith and with all our hearts and minds for it to do so.

In Sri Lanka's interventions within the Conference, we have consistently highlighted how the international and regional strategic landscapes were becoming increasingly constrained, thus underscoring the need, more than ever, for the Conference to get down to its actual, substantive task of addressing these challenges through the negotiation of disarmament treaties. We have expressed dismay that despite these evolving issues, this body has been unable to create the space for serious, substantive negotiations on legally binding instruments. Nevertheless, the year 2020, in our view, heralds a challenge as well as an opportunity for all of us to change course. This is the year of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which, to be successful, should send the right signal through the convergence of political will and flexibility on the matters that have kept us from initiating negotiations within Conference on Disarmament.

As reiterated earlier, Sri Lanka continues to uphold the following as important priorities in the disarmament arena:

- We stand for comprehensive disarmament, realized through a step-by-step approach, underpinned by the adoption of legally binding frameworks and also addressing legal gaps that may exist
- We attach priority to full compliance with and effective promotion of the implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty without further delay, as well as respect for its three pillars and the delicate balance built into the structure of the Treaty in favour of achieving nuclear disarmament
- We support the preservation of all existing disarmament architecture and the positive gains realized
- We remain committed to achieving a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space

- We advance and promote respect for the objectives of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention and continue to call for their effective and non-discriminatory implementation; we also remain committed to the objectives of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Protocols additional thereto and have proactively pursued humanitarian disarmament through the ratification and implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions
- We strongly support and call for the effective implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism
- We call for practical steps towards establishing and strengthening zones free of weapons of mass destruction, building upon the nuclear-free zones that already exist, in particular in the regions where such zones are not in place
- We express commitment to, and call for negotiation on, a legally binding instrument on negative security assurances
- We support the identification of and deliberation and negotiation on new and emerging issues, including lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Mr. President, we are fully conscious that, while what I have outlined here remains our principled position on disarmament issues, consensus-building is the way forward, which calls for flexibility without sacrificing the core of our commitment. We need to work hard to come to a point of convergence. Towards this end, Mr. President, we would like to assure you and all other colleagues present here that Sri Lanka remains ready and willing to support all efforts to generate and achieve such consensus within the Conference. We all need to seriously attempt to negotiate a programme of work and find a way forward that could facilitate or create momentum for work on all core issues.

Mr. President, I said I would be concluding my assignment as the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka shortly. I take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues – some left last year, some, like me, will be leaving shortly or over the course of the year and some others may have just begun their assignments and may be waiting to see the magic of a breakthrough this year. I take this opportunity to thank all of them for the camaraderie, cooperation and understanding extended to me and my team throughout my tenure. I should especially thank the Director-General, the Geneva branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Conference secretariat and my own staff for their continued support and guidance in making my tenure a fulfilling one.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Sri Lanka for his statement and for his kind words for the presidency. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Finland.

**Ms. Hakala** (Finland): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Madam Tatiana Valovaya, for her support for the work of the Conference.

In spite of the increasingly unpredictable and worrying global context, we hope that something positive can finally be achieved at the Conference on Disarmament this year. It is definitely time to try to change the pattern of work.

Finland also congratulates Algeria and you personally, dear colleague, on assuming the position of the first presidency of the 2020 session. You can count on our full support. We welcome new colleagues and wish good luck to those who are departing.

We also welcome the new approach taken by the session's six Presidents, who have now demonstrated that they intend to work more as a collective team and remain accessible to all delegations to discuss any issues related to the Conference. We encourage the six Presidents to take a pragmatic but ambitious approach, so that the Conference can do substantive work and function effectively.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, depending on the perspective of the observer, the glass can be half empty or half full. But it can also be seen as being just too big. This applies to the Conference's programme of work. By streamlining and simplifying the programme of work, we can end up with a text that can finally be agreed by us all.

While we are approaching the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, we need to be ready to revitalize the role of disarmament and this Conference as a vital part of multilateralism. Furthermore, the Review Conference is only three months ahead of us. There should be a vital link between the Conference on Disarmament and the Review Conference. We should not underestimate the role of the Conference on Disarmament in both preparing the substance and creating an atmosphere conducive to discussion in New York.

We see progress on discussions on nuclear risk reduction and hope that this topic will be highly visible at our discussions in New York. New and innovative thinking is needed. Finland has supported the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research's work on risk reduction and is pleased to participate in the "Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament" dialogue.

Mr. President, we deplore the position last week taken by Turkey on Cyprus's participation at the Conference as an observer, which led to the rejection of the latter's request to participate. We reiterate the position of the European Union and urge Turkey to reconsider its position in this matter.

Finally, Mr. President, strengthening the rules-based international system and its institutions is our overall objective. With this, we look forward to working with you and all delegations here to make this year successful.

I thank you for your attention.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Finland for her statement and for her kind words for the President. I now invite the Ambassador of Switzerland to take the floor.

**Mr. Baumann** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I am taking the floor for the very first time in the Conference on Disarmament in my capacity as Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference. Furthermore, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of this Conference and to assure you of my full support in the exercise of your function. I would also like to express my gratitude to you and other members of the Conference for your words of welcome. My thanks also go to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, who has honoured us with her presence this morning.

Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament begins its 2020 session at a time of increasing challenges to international security. Enabling the Conference to surmount the obstacles that have long stood in its way, so that it can continue to respond to these challenges, is thus all the more important. In this context, I would like to note a number of developments concerning our work. First of all, I welcome the initiative undertaken by the members of the Conference that will assume the presidency of the Conference to make their cooperation more robust. The initiative is a positive development that can help enhance the coordination and continuity of our activities, including those related to the adoption of a programme of work. I also welcome several statements made last week and this morning in which the Conference was encouraged to explore different ways of getting back to work.

The Swiss delegation, for its part, is persuaded that there are approaches available to the Conference other than the one that will bring it to a standstill if it does not agree on a programme of work including a negotiating mandate at the beginning of the year. There now seems to be greater acceptance of this idea. In 2018, it led to the establishment of subsidiary bodies that enabled the Conference to agree on substantive matters for the first time in 20 years. Last year, food for thought was provided by the working paper submitted by the delegation of the Netherlands, which encouraged us to return to the way the Conference approached its programme of work until the mid-1990s. Above all, the paper reminded us that the adoption of the programme of work and the adoption of a negotiating mandate or two are not necessarily linked and that dissociating these two points could allow us to move forward.

The background paper on the approach of the Conference on Disarmament to its programme of work since its creation, distributed last week by the six Presidents of the current session, makes it possible to continue thinking about the idea and delve more deeply into it. This paper highlights the range of approaches developed by the Conference. It serves as a reminder of the flexibility that its members have shown on several occasions in

their efforts to ensure progress on substantive work. One such occasion was in the early 1990s, when it was even decided to continue negotiations without formally adopting a programme of work.

Important mechanisms, such as special coordinators, have also been put in place to surmount obstacles in the current period. This applies not only to substantive issues but also to organizational issues such as the expansion of the membership of the Conference and the improved and effective functioning of the Conference.

Mr. President, we received the non-paper on a draft proposal for a programme of work that was distributed yesterday. It has been forwarded to our capital, and we will comment on it in detail at a later date. At this stage, I will simply point out that the draft proposal seems to be based on the various ideas I have just alluded to.

Before I conclude, I must make one last point. We find it deplorable that a State that has been a long-standing participant in our work as an observer has had its request opposed. This raises fundamental questions, particularly as this State, like others, has been requesting admission to the Conference for many years without receiving a response from us. The most recent expansion of the membership of the Conference was in 1999, and since then we have never really addressed the composition of the Conference, even though the rules of procedure require us to do so on a periodic basis. We should also address this issue during this session. Thank you for your attention.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Switzerland for his statement and for his kind words for the President. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

**Ms. Plath** (United States of America): Thank you again, Mr. President, for sharing your initial draft of the programme of work last night. It was very much appreciated.

While I appreciate that many member States here today are still delivering opening national statements and that you did not particularly want to discuss the draft in depth today, given some of the glaring omissions in this draft and some of the references already made here today on the programme of work in the months forward, my delegation feels compelled to put on record our position, particularly before we go too far down the road on this draft, which we find incomplete and insufficient in many ways.

As my delegation has made clear over at least the past six to eight months, we absolutely have requested at every corner, at every turn, at every discussion, that there be a reference to and an inclusion of a discussion on how we conduct our business here in the Conference on Disarmament. We have requested that there be a structured and formal discussion – we have discussed it and emphasized it repeatedly since the end of last year's session and more recently at the meetings of the First Committee. The resolution on the Conference was actually delayed for this very reason. I would hope that before we go further on having discussions on a programme of work or before we start constructive dialogue on a more fulsome scale that we are able to address this very valid concern that my delegation has repeatedly raised.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the United States of America for her statement and for her kind words for the President. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**Mr. Valero** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has asked for the floor today to welcome Ms. Valovaya, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. We appreciate the important remarks she has made on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres.

Indeed, as Secretary-General Guterres says, the world is today beset by threats to international peace and security, and disarmament instruments are affected. Dangerous flashpoints certainly lie ahead.

My delegation shares your hopes and concerns for the global security landscape and the Conference on Disarmament. Mr. President, we reiterate our full cooperation in and support for your work during the 2020 session.

The current security situation is indeed impeding the progress of this Conference. Increasing tensions between East and West do not help this Conference to fulfil its negotiating potential or reach legally binding agreements on nuclear disarmament. In recent weeks, however, States members of the Conference have demonstrated their willingness to find a meaningful solution and to secure the future of this forum.

Our country would like to reiterate the importance of this Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. Experience has shown that, to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons, it is essential for such weapons to be fully and unequivocally prohibited. The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is ready to progressively pursue that objective.

Mr. President, we are sure that the efforts of the six Presidents of the Conference are directed at this objective and we welcome the presentation of your non-paper on the proposed draft programme of work for the 2020 session. It strikes us as a very good basis for reaching consensus, and we hope to be able to discuss it before too long.

We share the hopes expressed by the Ambassadors of the Russian Federation, Egypt, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, among others, of breathing new life into the negotiation of politically binding instruments on disarmament. We note with interest the proposal put forward by China and Russia on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We also support your remarks about avoiding discriminatory approaches that may jeopardize our chances of compromise.

Mr. President, may we cordially invite you to continue working closely with the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Ms. Valovaya, to facilitate agreement on the 2020 programme of work.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for his statement and for his kind words for the presidency. I now invite the representative of Germany to take the floor.

**Mr. Pilz** (Germany): Mr. President, I am taking the floor to express my Government's astonishment over the decision by Turkey to reject the Republic of Cyprus's bid to be an observer in this august body. We believe that denying the observer status to a long-time observer in the Conference on Disarmament constitutes a negative precedent which might make our work more difficult at a time when the Conference is already facing a toxic mix of substantial challenges. We therefore strongly ask Turkey to reconsider its stance and to return to a more cooperative working mode.

I would like to reiterate our strong attachment to the position of the European Union expressed in last week's statement in this regard.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Germany for his statement. I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

**Ms. Flores Liera** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President.

As this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor, I wish to warmly congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the current session of the Conference on Disarmament.

You can count on the support of Mexico for efforts targeting our shared goal of overcoming the deadlock faced by this forum and enabling it to resume its substantive and fundamental obligation to negotiate.

This year, we once again have the opportunity to demonstrate our will to honour the commitment our countries made 42 years ago to work for a safer world in which there is no place for any weapon that has unacceptable humanitarian effects. We are a long way from that objective, and, in the light of the complexity of the current scenario, it is essential that we get back on track.

We have mixed feelings as we begin this session. On the one hand, we are encouraged that the Algerian presidency is spearheading our work and that the six Presidents of this session are working in close cooperation. We believe that this is a very



positive sign that all countries should keep in mind. On the other hand, we discern among delegations a feeling that we must regain the spirit of collaboration and make serious commitments, so that this forum can rediscover its essence and *raison d'être*.

We also recognize that the challenge is not one it will be easy to meet. Last year, 2019, was not only yet another year of deadlock in the Conference but also another year in which the profound state of deterioration in which this forum finds itself was highlighted.

In recent years, we have failed to agree on substantive reports. The impasse has been exacerbated by the increasing politicization we witnessed, which contaminated the discussions in 2018 and 2019 and were accompanied by surly exchanges that are incompatible with the atmosphere that should inspire the work of this forum.

We therefore call on all members to avoid actions that could politicize our discussions, such as opposing the participation of non-member States as observers. We believe that these attitudes do not contribute to the spirit of openness that should prevail, and we call for the objections raised to be reconsidered.

Mr. President, I am not going to refer to your programme; we very much welcome your presentation and will comment further when we are able to have a discussion on it. I would just like to say, however, that all of us member States – not just some of us – must conduct ourselves with greater flexibility and creativity in order to free the Conference from its state of paralysis.

Over the past twenty years, not only have we failed to conclude the negotiation of a binding instrument but we have also been unable even to make agreements in good faith in order to launch negotiations, despite the fact that there is work – on a fissile material treaty, for example – that could enable us to pursue that objective. Mexico cannot accept or support simulation, in particular in the context of the financial crisis facing the United Nations, which compels us to make productive and efficient use of resources.

You may rest assured, Mr. President, that Mexico will continue to contribute positively to the efforts of this Conference. We hope that it will resume its role as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body and we will work with you, with the Presidents and with all members in order to achieve this objective.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador – and I say Ambassador – for her statement and for her kind words for the presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

**Mr. Makarowski** (Sweden): Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, Sweden fully subscribes to the statement by the European Union delivered last week. Our positions on a number of key issues were outlined therein. In my national capacity, I would also like to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Our thanks go also to Madam Tatiana Valovaya for her presence here and her remarks.

Mr. President, we are encouraged by the constructive approach planned by this year's six Presidents. We are studying your proposals with interest and trust that the deadlock in the Conference can be broken soon. Let me assure you of the full cooperation and support of the Swedish delegation.

Mr. President, Sweden regrets that consensus was prevented on the request by Cyprus to participate in the work of the Conference as an observer. That is contrary to long-established practice and does not contribute to the spirit of cooperation so badly needed in the Conference. We urge Turkey to reconsider its position.

I thank you.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Sweden for his statement and for his kind words for the President. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

**Mr. Sharma** (India): Mr. President, I am taking the floor to exercise our right of reply to the statement made by Pakistan earlier in the meeting. Pakistan has made an attempt to present baseless fabrications and resurrect some of the old and discredited ideas and proposals. This is not new, as Pakistan has made a habit of abusing every single forum,

including the First Committee and the General Assembly. Fortunately, the world sees through its lies and deceit.

Our position on these issues is well known and needs no reiteration. India's security concerns are not confined to a region, and therefore India has always approached these issues in a global context.

Pakistan has also made a number of baseless and unsubstantiated allegations against India, including in relation to the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, which do not even deserve a response as they pertain to matters internal to India. As a responsible State, India strictly abides by its obligations under international treaties and needs no lessons from a country which has no credibility.

Mr. President, it would have been better if this country had refrained from making comments on issues that are extraneous to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament is not the forum for bilateral or regional issues, as its mandate is to focus on agreements of global applicability. As India has made clear several times, India is opposed to consideration of regional security issues in the Conference on Disarmament. India's impeccable non-proliferation record is widely recognized. As such, I do not need to respond to the baseless remarks by Pakistan. India's position on the anti-satellite test conducted on 27 March 2019 is a matter of public record and needs no reiteration.

In 2020, as we were looking forward to a new start on substantive work by this Conference, the statement by Pakistan can only be viewed as unhelpful. This Conference will recall from previous years' proceedings how this country blocked the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty on several occasions, including in 2009, when the Conference arrived at a consensus programme of work under the presidency of Algeria, your own country, Mr. President.

We urge the Pakistani delegation to avoid bringing up extraneous issues designed to create obstacles in the path of the Conference on Disarmament's getting down to serious and substantive work. In fact, we would like to urge this country to live up to its commitment to acting with responsibility and to demonstrate that commitment by working towards consensus on a programme of work that would allow the commencement of substantive work, including the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, at an early date.

We hope that the Conference will get down to substantive work at the earliest. The Conference has a vast agenda dealing with global issues relating to disarmament and international security, and we hope that Pakistan will refrain from misusing this forum and wasting our precious time by raising issues extraneous to it. Since I have already said what I need to say, I will not take the floor again or spend any more time on this issue out of respect for the work of the Conference on Disarmament under your able leadership and guidance.

Mr. President, in the best of the traditions that my country represents, I will not let the negativity created by Pakistan's statement in this august body affect us and would like to take this opportunity to pay our sincere tribute to the valuable contributions made by Ambassador Azeez, our colleague from Sri Lanka. We owe him our gratitude for having successfully steered the work of the Conference, leading to the successful substantive work conducted in 2018. We will certainly miss his wise counsel and the collegiate spirit in which his delegation participated under his leadership. I wish him the very best for his future assignment.

I thank you, Mr. President.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of India for his statement and give the floor to the representative of France.

**Ms. Delaroche** (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. With regard to my country's broader positions on the functioning and priorities of the Conference on Disarmament, I refer you to the statement we made last week. I simply wish to add my voice to that of the many delegations that have taken the floor today and concurred with the statement of the European Union last week calling on Turkey to reconsider its refusal to grant observer status to the Republic of Cyprus. Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of France for her statement and give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Ağacikoğlu** (Turkey): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to exercise my right of reply to the interventions we have just heard from some delegations. We understand that we need to underline our position once again this week. I would like to start once again by explaining the reasoning behind our non-approval of a certain request for observer status in the Conference on Disarmament.

We believe that most delegates will recall the opening meeting of the 2019 session and how the request of Palestine for observer status was blocked by a few members. With that rejection, made at the request of some countries, the established practice of treating observers' applications as a blanket list was eroded.

Their basic argument was that they did not recognize Palestine as a State. We were surprised, since we heard of this matter only in the plenary meeting on that day. At this point, I would like to remind you that Turkey does not recognize the Greek Cypriot Administration, which does not represent the entire island. Nevertheless, last year we were respectful as some Conference members exercised their sovereign rights. Therefore, we only registered our support for the application of Palestine and noted that there was a way of responding that was more constructive than blocking observer status. That is what we have done in the past: not by rejecting the request but instead by registering our position via a letter or note verbale. Also, many delegations registered their support for the request of that country, and all of them were kind enough not to define the rejection of the request as a blockage.

Moreover, it was surprising to see that those European States and the European Union, which were silent last year, preferred to intervene this year on this particular situation. It is also surprising to be accused of politicizing the Conference, when we exercised exactly the same rights as others did.

Mr. President, we do not see any difference between the request of Palestine and others, in accordance with the rules of procedures of this body. We have no doubt last year that the Secretary-General of the Conference, the Deputy Secretary-General and the Conference secretariat, including the presidency, completed the necessary checks regarding the list of applications for observer status. That list included the request of Palestine. This means Palestine was found eligible to apply for observer status.

In respect of applications for observer status, Palestine and the Greek Cypriot Administration had the very same status before the Conference. Therefore, we were compelled to change our position. In that regard, Turkey cannot accept any double standards. The negative precedents with regard to the observers were set last year, not, as my German colleague stated, this year.

Thank you very much.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Turkey for his statement and give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Jadoon** (Pakistan): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I have requested the floor to respond to the comments made by the Ambassador of India. The references to India in the statement delivered by our Permanent Representative earlier today were all based on facts on the ground and other recent developments. These facts might be uncomfortable for India, but they are solid and irrefutable. The toxic, extremist ideology pervasive in India today, along with its offensive doctrines and hegemonic pretensions, its quest for strategic and military dominance, a history of aggression against its neighbours and the refusal to engage in a dialogue or mediation on dispute resolution, confidence-building and risk reduction, presents a clear and present danger not just to Pakistan but also to regional and international peace and security. India's recent illegitimate actions in occupied Jammu and Kashmir in blatant disregard of Security Council resolutions, coupled with its belligerent rhetoric, have made the regional security situation worse. Contrary to the assertions made, these issues are completely germane to the Conference on Disarmament because they carry grave implications for regional and international peace and security. India must act responsibly and work towards preserving rather than imperilling peace in South Asia.

India's spurious claim that its security compulsions are not confined to any geographical region is belied by the fact that the bulk of India's offensive capability is deployed against Pakistan. And that is not all. The senior political and military leadership of India has openly resorted to irresponsible rhetoric and sabre-rattling, which reflects a dangerous hegemonic mindset.

The Indian Ambassador's statement did not address the many facts presented by my delegation regarding its massive destabilizing arms build-up and aggressive military policies and the purpose behind them. India itself publicly claimed to have carried out its first deterrence patrol in a nuclear-powered submarine presumably equipped with nuclear weapons in August 2018. India continues to publicly announce its tests of a wide range of delivery systems for both conventional and nuclear weapons. The test of an anti-satellite weapon was also proudly announced by India itself. Similarly, the statements by Indian leaders regarding changes in the country's declaratory "no first use" nuclear posture are also a matter of public record. These actions are in addition to the development and operationalization by India of highly aggressive and destabilizing military doctrines that envisaged conventional attacks on Pakistan below the perceived nuclear threshold.

Mr. President, India's illegitimate actions of 5 August 2019 in Jammu and Kashmir are aimed at further consolidating its illegal occupation of this territory. These moves are in clear breach of Security Council resolutions, particularly with regard to the realization of the Kashmiris' right to self-determination. The gross and systematic violation of international law and international human rights law by India has reached unprecedented levels, as extensively catalogued in the reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other human rights bodies and civil society organizations.

Let me emphasize one fact here, Mr. President. Jammu and Kashmir is neither an integral part of India nor an Indian internal matter. In accordance with Security Council resolutions, it is an internationally recognized disputed territory. The Security Council has met on no less than three occasions during the last five months to address this matter, recognizing the threat posed by India to international peace and security and regional strategic stability in South Asia.

Lastly, Mr. President, regarding the gratuitous claim about India's support for a fissile material cut-off treaty, after amassing tons of unsafeguarded fissile material as its so-called strategic reserve, directly aided and abetted by discriminatory waivers from the Nuclear Suppliers Group and nuclear cooperation agreements with many major supplier countries, India can surely do some grandstanding by maintaining a declaratory position in favour of the commencement of fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations. For Pakistan, these declarations ring hollow. If India claims to support a fissile material cut-off treaty, then why does it insist on basing the negotiations on the restrictive Shannon mandate? Why is it unwilling to include existing stocks in the treaty's scope in a manner that would genuinely contribute to global and regional stability as well as to nuclear disarmament, which India also claims to support? It comes as no surprise to Pakistan that India is the strongest opponent of extending the future treaty's scope in a manner that encompasses existing stocks, in order to perpetuate the prevailing asymmetries in South Asia to India's permanent strategic advantage. Also, unlike the other nuclear-armed States that favoured the commencement of fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations, India has neither declared a unilateral moratorium nor ceased the production of fissile material. It directly benefits from the current situation that it is disingenuously blaming on Pakistan by continuing to increase its fissile material stocks. If ceasing national production is a good gauge of working in good faith towards the start of fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations, India fails to fulfil that condition.

Pakistan's position on a fissile material cut-off treaty is, like that of any other Conference member, guided by its national security interests, as is its position on a programme of work. The treaty should provide undiminished security for all States, a principle recognized at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It should contribute to the objectives of both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. The way to the treaty is currently envisaged under the Shannon mandate, which affects Pakistan disproportionately. We have been compelled to oppose such negotiations, as they would be detrimental to our vital national security interests. Other countries in a situation similar to ours take exactly the same position on

issues that prejudice their national security in the Conference. We are, however, open and constructive in our engagement in this matter and are looking for a solution that addresses the concerns of all affected countries. We have offered many proposals and ideas bilaterally and in the Conference. Some of these proposals and ideals have been repeatedly rejected by India.

We are, Mr. President, openly opposed to a fissile material cut-off treaty based on the Shannon mandate for the reasons highlighted. However, we remain open to considering a mandate for negotiations that expressly includes existing stocks in the treaty's scope.

I thank you very much.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Azadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation expresses appreciation for your effort in preparing the draft programme of work. While we are looking carefully at the draft, I would like to offer new thoughts on a preliminary basis.

First, Iran firmly believes in the relevance and the crucial role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole negotiating forum on nuclear disarmament. We need to preserve this status. There are many forums, including the First Committee, for discussion or debate. Second, we need to focus the Conference's attention on the four core agenda items and avoid any unhealthy distraction at a time when nuclear disarmament is of crucial necessity.

I thank you.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I see no requests for the floor. Dear colleagues, I now wish to suspend the formal meeting and proceed to an informal meeting.

*The meeting was suspended at noon and resumed at 12.10 p.m.*

**The President** (*spoke in French*): Dear colleagues, I thank you once again for your comments and suggestions, and once again I assure you that, together with the five other Presidents, I will endeavour to take them into consideration. I also encourage delegations to contact me bilaterally if they have any questions they would like to discuss in greater detail.

The next plenary meeting will be on Tuesday, 4 March. Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.*