

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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**Final record of the one thousand five hundred and thirty-second plenary meeting**


Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 24 February 2020, at 10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Carlos Mario Foradori ..... (Argentina)

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**The President:** I call to order the 1532nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Distinguished colleagues, we begin this morning with the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament. Allow me at this stage to suspend this meeting to welcome our first guest, His Excellency Mr. Philippe Goffin, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense of Belgium.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Distinguished colleagues, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our first guest today, His Excellency Mr. Philippe Goffin, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense of Belgium. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Mr. Goffin** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. Although the Conference on Disarmament has a unique mandate, it can only fully assume its role as the driving force in disarmament if it manages to overcome the deadlock that has lasted for too long. There is no excuse for inaction, even in a challenging security environment. The current situation requires us all, as a matter of urgency, to show renewed political will. Doubts concerning the continuity of the main strategic arms agreement beyond 2021 and growing mistrust among the major Powers mean that we cannot allow any further paralysis in the Conference. Dialogue must resume its course and concrete steps must be taken in the right direction.

In this regard, Belgium wishes to commend the determination and commitment of the six Presidents of this session, who, through innovative initiatives such as the submission of a joint proposal for a programme of work, are trying to breathe new life into the Conference. We fully support this approach and we are honoured, as the first presidency of 2021, to participate as an observer in the meetings of the six Presidents of 2020. It is essential that the Conference redouble efforts to adopt a programme of work this year. Belgium calls on all partners to join a consensus on the proposal of the six Presidents without delay.

My country remains firmly committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and in that regard supports several key initiatives that bring us closer to a world where we will no longer all live under the threat of a nuclear attack.

In this year of the 2020 Review Conference, Belgium reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This Treaty is the cornerstone of our nuclear weapons policy and an irreplaceable bulwark against the risks of nuclear proliferation. At the Review Conference, States parties should celebrate the Treaty's achievements over the past 50 years and agree on measures to improve its implementation. The Treaty is a collective endeavour. While each of us benefits from membership of the Treaty, 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 parties to renew their political commitment to achieving the objectives of the Treaty.

We call for the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament towards the adoption of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The work done by experts in recent years has helped to prepare the ground and to define various potential provisions of a future treaty. These deliberations have shown that all issues of substance, including the question of existing stocks, can be resolved only within the framework of negotiations of this treaty. The commencement of negotiations should therefore no longer be linked to preconditions.

The continued uncertainties surrounding the North Korean nuclear issue remind us of the need to intensify our efforts to implement a comprehensive and verified nuclear test ban. We therefore regret the postponement of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was negotiated in this Conference over 20 years ago. There is only one instrument that can guarantee a complete ban on nuclear tests and that can make it possible to detect hidden tests. There is thus no alternative to this treaty and no short cut to a world without nuclear weapons. Only through the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will this goal be achieved.

Belgium attaches particular importance to an international order based on the rule of law. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty has been a transparent, verifiable and indispensable legal instrument for Euro-Atlantic security over the past 30 years. We regret that this treaty could not be preserved following the introduction of a new Russian missile system. We are concerned about the negative impact that the demise of the Treaty has had on our collective security and on the collective belief that the rule of law is the foundation of the international order.

Yet it is never too late to move in the right direction. We call on the Russian Federation and the United States of America to reach agreement on the renewal of the New START in 2021. It is also important that this treaty is followed by other initiatives to reduce strategic and non-strategic nuclear arsenals, both deployed and non-deployed. The strengthening of strategic dialogue and the rebuilding of trust through specific actions that increase transparency and allow the verification of commitments are essential for achieving these objectives.

Beyond the special responsibility that falls on the two States that possess 90 per cent of the world's nuclear weapons, the other nuclear-weapon States must also shoulder their share of responsibility. In the relatively recent past, France and the United Kingdom have taken encouraging steps to reduce stockpiles and means of delivery. We also appreciate the transparency shown by France in its operation to dismantle its fissile material production capacities, notably by organizing a field visit this year. It is important that China, too, should bear its share of responsibility as a nuclear Power, particularly in view of its increased role on the world stage and the expansion of its nuclear arsenal. China has a duty to ensure the transparency of its nuclear programme and the steps it is taking to reduce the number and the role of nuclear weapons in its military doctrine. An official moratorium on the production of fissile material would also be a positive step.

My country welcomes the attention given to the issue of nuclear disarmament verification within the United Nations and in the framework of several voluntary initiatives, such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, in which Belgium takes part. In that context, in September 2019, Belgium organized an exercise aimed at testing a nuclear measurement method that distinguishes between weapons-grade plutonium and plutonium intended for civilian use.

In recent years, the norm prohibiting chemical weapons has been dangerously eroded as a result of violations by States and non-State actors. The exemplary moral force of the Chemical Weapons Convention can be fully restored only through a unified and firm response by all States that have fully acceded to the Convention. In addition to condemning violence and violations of this nature, States wishing to keep the world free of chemical weapons must lend their full support to the measures taken to remedy the situation and to the Investigation and Identification Team. My country reaffirms its commitment to the irreplaceable role of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in combating the scourge of these weapons. To strengthen this role, particularly in terms of analytical capacity, Belgium has given €2 million towards the construction of a new laboratory in the Netherlands. We hope that as many States as possible will demonstrate the same conviction by making a contribution, even a modest one, to the Organization.

Mr. President, my country affirms its full support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the only credible instrument on the table that can guarantee the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme. The Plan of Action is yielding concrete results and 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 full 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 put itself forward as a candidate to preside over the Nuclear Suppliers Group for the period 2020/21. Its presidency will begin with a plenary meeting in Brussels in June 2020. The organization of this meeting once again demonstrates our commitment to the international non-proliferation framework through political engagement and a readiness to share responsibilities.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, Belgium will have the honour of presiding over the work of this august Conference in January 2021. We will commence preparations for our presidency at the end of this year, in cooperation with the next six Presidents, with whom we are looking forward to working. Finally, it is important for my country that the Conference's work should be inclusive and transparent and that States that are not yet parties should be able to follow this work as observers. We therefore regret that Turkey has blocked the decision to grant Cyprus observer status this year. We urge Turkey to reconsider its decision. Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President:** Thank you, Minister. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort the Minister from the Chamber and to welcome our next guest, His Excellency Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Mr. Rinkēvičs (Latvia):** Thank you very much. It is great to be back – I think it is my fifth address to the Conference on Disarmament during my tenure.

Mr. President, first of all, I would like to congratulate Argentina on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and express Latvia's full support and cooperation. I praise the outgoing presidency of Algeria for its innovative way of attempting to put the Conference on Disarmament to work. I would also like to express my appreciation to the United Nations Secretary-General, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament for their endeavours to facilitate effective discussions on disarmament and non-proliferation matters.

The Conference on Disarmament has played a historic role in advancing consequential discussions that have led to the global disarmament acquis as we know it today. It is largely due to the Conference and its predecessors that today we have at our disposal a number of important treaties, which are essential elements of the overall international rules-based order. This has been made possible through a combination of determined diplomatic efforts and political will.

However, times have changed. Professional diplomatic efforts remain a cornerstone of this Conference and of other disarmament forums. Yet we are witnessing a steep decline in the political will of certain States required for the effective implementation of existing norms and the development of new norms.

This is not due to some sudden disappearance of the multifaceted threats that we face. Rather, it is a result of attempts to weaken the multilateral bodies, norms and the spirit of the international rules-based order itself.

Some have called it an "erosion" of the multilateral system. I do not believe that this term is appropriate, because it describes something almost inevitable and irreversible; it serves as a precursor to entropy. I am confident that many challenges the international rules-based order is currently experiencing do not represent a cliff edge from which there is no return. I rather prefer the analogy of a muscle that has weakened after injury and inaction, both accidental and deliberate. But it is still capable of healing and carrying the immense weight that the global community has entrusted to it.

For arms control and disarmament to be possible and effective, all parties need to abide by the rules. Common interests and a bare minimum of trust are needed in this regard. The re-establishment of constructive engagement will require exactly this – renewed common efforts guided by well-established international norms.

Mr. President, in this spirit, guided by trust in our ability to meet and overcome the challenges we face, allow me to mention some of the most pressing issues that the Conference on Disarmament must tackle. Above all else, the effectiveness of the Conference must be renewed. To that end, it must first agree upon a substantive programme of work. The re-establishment of subsidiary bodies would further allow the necessary

discussions to continue. In this sense, the package proposal of the Algerian presidency is a promising way forward. I hope that it will be adopted in the coming weeks.

Latvia believes that it is important to continue consultations on expanding the membership of the Conference. I regret that, this time, enlargement is not part of the package. Universalization is an important element for ensuring the legitimacy of the Conference in a changing world. It is also needed for the Conference to be able to respond to all of the upcoming challenges.

The Conference on Disarmament has negotiated two landmark conventions – namely, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. These have been highly important and effective conventions, but issues plague even these historically successful regimes.

Despite the increasingly dangerous potency of biological weapons, we still face a biological arms regime that barely has a pulse. It not only lacks the appropriate funding but has also often been overlooked in a political sense. The dire financial situation of the Biological Weapons Convention puts the secretariat and its work under considerable strain. Measures adopted in 2018 are steps in the right direction, but they will not remedy the chronic failure of some member States to honour their financial obligations under the Convention. I urge all States parties to fulfil their financial obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention on time and in full.

As for the Chemical Weapons Convention, it has recently been defied on a number of occasions – in Syria, Malaysia and the United Kingdom. This type of behaviour, if unchecked, poses a serious threat to this important global non-proliferation and disarmament regime. No one should ever be exposed to such horrendous weapons. Therefore, we commend efforts by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Investigation and Identification Team to ensure that those responsible for the rise of chemical weapons are held accountable. It is our duty and responsibility to uphold the long-standing international norm against the use of chemical weapons. The stigma attached to these weapons should only grow in severity.

Mr. President, the times are also changing in regard to nuclear weapons. In recent years a number of States have embraced the idea of policy through nuclear rhetoric. Indeed, aggressive rhetoric involving the threat of use of nuclear weapons is used with increasing frequency by certain States as just another tool to further their aggressive foreign policy. These kinds of actions contribute to the weakening of the international rules-based order.

We have a chance to prove our commitment to the international system. We have an opportunity to take the conversation about nuclear weapons back to where it belongs – away from their malicious use as pieces on a political chessboard. This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This Treaty is at the core of international security and stability, and we must renew and increase our efforts to strengthen it.

The NPT Review Conference will commence soon. It is crucial that we strive for a substantive and results-oriented process that will enable us to better promote the universalization and strengthen the implementation of the Treaty as a cornerstone of global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.

We must not fall into the trap of low ambitions and a permanent status quo saddled with growing bureaucratic issues. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and immediate and substantive negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material cut-off treaty are our best opportunities to prove the seriousness of our intentions to genuinely advance global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

The path that I am speaking about is not a new one. The only credible way towards nuclear disarmament lies in a step-by-step approach that considers the wider security context. In this regard, the “building blocks” set out in the action plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference have not lost their relevance.

To this end, we welcome the commitment by the five nuclear-weapon States designated as such under the Treaty to enhance coordination and dialogue, as well as their

commitment to the Treaty in all its aspects. We also support additional efforts from a wide variety of States and groups aimed at developing practical steps conducive to progress on nuclear disarmament, such as risk reduction, verification and enhanced dialogue.

Mr. President, last but not least, the international community must focus not only on weapons of mass destruction but also on conventional arms. This is particularly true when considering the number of people affected by the use of conventional weapons every day. Conventional arms kill around 500,000 people per year, of whom 70,000 are killed in conflict zones. In this respect, Latvia has contributed to international processes in the area of conventional arms by presiding over the Arms Trade Treaty last year and assuming the chairmanship of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems in 2020.

Mr. President, the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice. There is no better representation of justice than a strong, well-functioning and reliable international system based on laws and norms. Therefore, the path forward is clear. How exactly will we get there and how long it will take depends entirely on our commitment and collective political will. Thank you very much.

**The President:** I thank His Excellency Mr. Rinkēvičs for his statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort His Excellency from the Chamber and to welcome our next guest, Her Excellency Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, Her Excellency Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Ms. Kang Kyung-wha (Republic of Korea):** Thank you very much. Mr. President, Madam Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, distinguished delegates, I am very honoured to be back in the Conference and speaking to you today. But I must say that I speak to you with great concern that we face another challenging year in an increasingly complex global security environment.

Global tensions are on the rise. The nuclear arms control architecture seems to have given way, as we see in the unravelling of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the uncertain future of the New START. New and emerging technologies, such as autonomous weapons systems and hypersonic weapons, and the expansion of human activities into cyberspace and outer space have added complexity to these challenges. They are bringing about fundamental changes to the strategic balance and growing unpredictability in strategic planning.

There is a pressing need to reverse such troubling trends and regain international stability and strengthen global security. Much is at stake, not least the further erosion of the credibility of the Conference as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.

In the course of the last four decades, the Geneva negotiating body has produced several landmark instruments, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, but it has remained deadlocked without delivering any tangible outcomes for well over two decades.

We need to have a fresh review of this body, identify ways to revitalize its work and move forward in disarmament negotiations. My Government welcomes in this regard the initiative taken by this year's six Presidents – the P6 – who have shown their strong commitment to working together towards this goal.

To break through the impasse and bring the Conference back to its proper place, we need a practical, flexible and realistic approach. We could further narrow down the list of agenda items adopted each year, focusing on pressing items to promote the Conference's effectiveness in addressing current security challenges. And, given the Conference's inability to move on to negotiation, the member States could try to reach consensus first on

non-binding measures, such as rules, norms and codes of conduct, as a way of advancing substantive discussions on specific items. It would be also helpful to discuss how to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Conference's current working methods.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, this year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations as well as the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The Treaty has been the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. And yet we are witnessing a deterioration in the global security environment. While arms control is unravelling, global defence spending is on the rise.

The 2020 NPT Review Conference takes place under these sobering circumstances. And its failure to produce a meaningful outcome will be all the more crippling and certainly in nobody's interest. The chances of its success will be enhanced if we are able to make progress in such areas as the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. This would go a long way towards restoring faith in the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

As for the Republic of Korea, we have been sparing no effort to actively contribute to strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Last year, we proposed a new General Assembly resolution titled "Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation". It was adopted by consensus, thanks to the general support of the United Nations membership. This resolution aims to empower, engage and educate the young generation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and to enlist its fresh views and ideas into the disarmament discussions with a view to overcoming the long stalemate and polarization.

Distinguished delegates, as you are well aware, my Government has been pursuing the Korean Peninsula peace process and diplomatic engagement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to achieve complete denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. The engagement has stalled in recent months, and we regret that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has not yet returned to the negotiating table, despite our steadfast and patient efforts to promote dialogue and cooperation.

My Government nevertheless remains firmly committed to staying the course towards complete denuclearization and the establishment of lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. A speedy resumption of the negotiations between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is critical, so that all stakeholders maintain and build upon the hard-won momentum for dialogue.

We stand ready to engage with the North in a way that facilitates and accelerates the dialogue between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. At the beginning of the year, President Moon Jae-in proposed a number of inter-Korean projects and called upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to join. Through these projects, my Government seeks to break the stalemate, pave the way for the resumption of talks between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and strengthen the environment for sustained dialogue and cooperation. And we will do so while adhering faithfully to the international sanctions regime on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In this long journey towards complete denuclearization and lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula, we count on the steady and unwavering support of the international community.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, no one can dispute the importance of disarmament in strengthening global security and promoting strategic stability. Given the current security environment and the challenges we face, we cannot afford to waste any more time or effort in restoring the credibility of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Republic of Korea stands ready to work with all other member States committed to moving forward on disarmament and revitalizing the work of the Conference. We hope that all the membership will work together with a clear set of goals, so that the Conference can make real and meaningful progress this year. Together, we must provide much-needed momentum for the successful outcome of the 2020 NPT Review Conference this coming April. Thank you very much.

**The President:** Thank you, Excellency, for your statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Her Excellency Ms. Kang

Kyung-wha from the Chamber and to welcome our next guest, His Excellency Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest, His Excellency Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Mr. Le Drian** (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President. It is a great honour for me to speak to the Conference on Disarmament today because, over the years, the Conference has set standards and negotiated treaties that have strengthened our collective security and the stability of our strategic environment. I recognize, too, the responsibility that is mine in addressing the Conference, considering that what the Conference has built, and indeed what it embodies, is now being challenged. Challenged, first of all, by those who do not respect the instruments we have negotiated here. I have in mind the recent blatant violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Challenged, too, by those who refuse to genuinely commit to the negotiation of new norms to allow us to counter the return of a conventional or nuclear arms race.

Let me take one example. It is now urgent that we collectively define ways and means of controlling the risk of incidents, deliberate acts and even hostile acts in outer space. Yet on this major strategic issue that engages our collective security, we have not yet managed to unite around a pragmatic programme that combines transparency and confidence-building measures with legal negotiations.

The States that have understood that it is in their interest to be able to rely on protective and stabilizing rules – in fact, the vast majority of States – cannot agree to being the only ones that respect our common rules. Nor can they accept these breaches, these obstructions and, to be honest, this crisis in disarmament, which is one of the most worrying manifestations of the crisis in the multilateral system, the systematization of power relations and the heightening of international competition that characterize our times.

For France, the Conference remains an essential forum. That is why I wished to seize this opportunity to come before you today, to share with you, in practical terms, what we think a responsible disarmament in the service of international stability might look like. I stress the word “responsible” because we must never lose sight of the obvious: while the aim of disarmament is our collective security, it cannot take place without taking into account the security interests of those who actually implement it. This is particularly true of nuclear disarmament, which is achieved by degrees on the basis of the principle of undiminished security for all.

The President of France clearly set out the country’s vision on this issue in his speech of 7 February 2020 on defence and deterrence strategy. This vision, which France will put forward in a few weeks’ time at the 2020 Review Conference, is based on three pillars.

The first pillar is that of strict compliance with the central norm that is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which we call on all States to implement. For this reason, we are particularly vigilant with regard to the risk of proliferation crises, which represent existential threats to the Treaty’s integrity. We therefore continue our efforts to preserve the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and to bring Iran back into compliance with that agreement. Our efforts to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of the nuclear and missile programmes of North Korea are undertaken in the same spirit.

The second pillar of our approach is the deepening of normative work in this forum; work which, in my view, should be undertaken as a matter of urgency, firstly, by negotiating here in this Conference a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. You recently had the opportunity to visit our facilities at Pierrelatte and Marcoule, which we have irreversibly dismantled, so you know that, on this subject, France considers that it has shown the way. Secondly, through the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which as I recall was successfully negotiated by this Conference. And thirdly, by holding new

discussions on nuclear disarmament verification to ensure that any disarmament agreements can be verified in a robust manner. This is the meaning of the second pillar of our approach: the deepening of normative work.

The third pillar refers to the need to do practical work on strategic risk reduction and on transparency and confidence-building with regard to the nuclear arsenals, doctrines and strategies of the five nuclear-weapon States that are permanent members of the Security Council. I am aware of the quality of the discussions that are taking place in Geneva on this subject, and I would like to commend the lynchpin of these discussions, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, whose fortieth anniversary we celebrate this year.

We are also convinced of the importance of setting out a new arms control agenda. France is keen to commit to such an agenda and it encourages its European partners to do the same. This is essential both for safeguarding existing instruments – with the renewal, we hope, of the New START between the United States and Russia – and for providing ourselves with new instruments following the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

In the area of conventional weapons, the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems is carrying on its important work. We must strengthen this work, considering that once the foundations were laid for an international agreement on this subject, concerns emerged that have no justification in current strategic realities. All countries must now seek to implement, without delay, the 11 principles that have been agreed in this framework. Together with Germany, we will call for specific political commitments to be made at the 2021 Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

I should also mention the issue of explosive weapons in urban conflicts. We need to set a course that enables the increased sharing of best practices for the application of international law in the conduct of our operations. That should be the aim of the political declaration currently being negotiated here in Geneva.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the full support of France for the Conference on Disarmament and to commend the work of all the experts from the disarmament community, who I know have a sincere and powerful commitment to these issues of vital importance. Thank you for your attention.

**The President:** Thank you, Minister. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort His Excellency Mr. Le Drian from the Chamber and to welcome our next guest, His Excellency Jacek Czaputowicz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland. Thank you.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, His Excellency Mr. Jacek Czaputowicz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Mr. Czaputowicz (Poland):** Mr. President, Madam Director-General, distinguished colleagues, this historic Council Chamber epitomizes great achievements of multilateral diplomacy in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. We all share a memory of the negotiations of those memorable treaties and accords which have permanently shaped the global security architecture. Today, we must do our best to save the legacy of the “Geneva spirit” and revive the potential of the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me briefly make a historical reflection: in 1978, the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, was adopted, establishing the Committee on Disarmament. This opened new opportunities in the field of disarmament. However, after the adoption of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in the 1990s, the Conference made no further progress.

This regrettable deadlock seems to be due to political reasons of an external character, a lack of political will, the growing significance of superiority and the increasing

military competition of certain countries. Another aspect to reflect upon, should the necessary progress be achieved, is the internal functioning of the Conference. This question stood at the heart of Poland's presidencies in 2006 and 2016.

Firstly, the organization of the work of the Conference can be improved only by consensual decision of the member States. Secondly, it is crucial to consider whether the current agenda of the Conference properly reflects the international security context. It should follow the relevant contemporary developments, including those related to rapid technological progress – for example, in the field of artificial intelligence, autonomy or cybercapabilities.

Those issues have not been reflected in the agenda. At the same time, the comprehensive programme of disarmament or transparency in armaments, which are part of the agenda, have not been sufficiently addressed for many years. We should be able to revise the Conference agenda. Otherwise, it may lose its relevance.

Secondly, Poland attaches high priority to an early launch of the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We believe that such an instrument would allow for strengthening nuclear non-proliferation and synchronizing it with other initiatives related to the nuclear disarmament verification process.

Thirdly, the United Nations Disarmament Commission was established as an incubator of fresh disarmament ideas. However, it has not produced substantial proposals for years. Poland believes that the Commission requires serious structural reforms.

As a matter of priority, the duration of the Commission's annual session could be reduced significantly, to one "disarmament week". The results of the Commission's deliberations should be forwarded in a factual report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. President, on 5 March we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the world's most universal treaty. Poland's strong engagement in the current NPT review cycle is underpinned by our firm conviction that the Treaty remains the cornerstone of the global security architecture.

Poland, as the Chair of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference and part of the Bureau for the upcoming Review Conference, has been fully engaged in safeguarding the integrity and credibility of the Treaty.

As regards the 2020 Review Conference, we intend to create an environment for inclusive, mutually respectful and transparent dialogue. The high-level session of the Review Conference, and the attendance, on the political level, of States parties to the Treaty will clearly demonstrate the importance and the special role of the Treaty in the arms control system. The Treaty's role is so important because it remains the only universally binding mechanism with regard to arms control and global security.

Regional conflicts have repeatedly been a matter of concern. As a member of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission since 1953, Poland is particularly engaged in the activities aimed at restoring peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. Three meetings between two Conference on Disarmament members – the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea – aiming at the denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did not bring a satisfactory solution. We, however, are of the view, that once the agreement is reached, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should carry out its verification duties at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear facilities.

Iran's cooperation with IAEA is also necessary. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action aimed to stop nuclear proliferation in the region. However, recent IAEA reports on Iran clearly show Tehran's non-compliance with the Plan's provisions on uranium enrichment and its stocks. We hope that the dispute settlement mechanism activated by France, Germany and the United Kingdom on 14 January will bring Iran back into full compliance with the Plan's requirements.

There are also positive developments in the field of conventional disarmament. The process was achieved with regard to reducing the impact of conventional weapons on

civilians. The recent Oslo Review Conference on a Mine-Free World adopted an ambitious plan on the implementation of States parties' obligations under the Mine Ban Convention. Fifty concrete actions aiming at protecting people and ending the suffering they are caused by anti-personnel mines were agreed.

There is potential for further development in the area of artificial intelligence under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which prohibits or restricts the use of weapons with excessively injurious or indiscriminate effects. In 2019, Poland successfully chaired the work under Amended Protocol II to the Convention, which restricts or prohibits the use of mines, booby traps and other explosive devices. As a result, States parties exchanged good practices with regard to the neutralization of explosive devices and protection of civilians.

Finally, the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems, where Poland provides a meaningful contribution, is useful. We expect that 2021 will bring further progress in the area of disruptive technologies and the way to regulate them without harming their development.

Last year, Poland, together with the United States, initiated the Warsaw Process, addressing horizontal issues related to peace and security in the Middle East. A significant part of the Process focuses on the issue of non-proliferation of missiles. This topic was thoroughly discussed in Bucharest in November last year by the working group on missile proliferation. The participants underlined the necessity of cooperation between States and non-State actors. The latter tend to be potential sources of missile proliferation and missile-related sensitive technologies or raw materials. The working group also encouraged States to take steps, in their national capacities, to meet the security challenges stemming from missile proliferation in the Middle East.

Distinguished delegates, today's world is changing at a rapid pace. In this world, an effective arms control system is necessary to ensure peace, predictability and stability for all of us. May the Geneva spirit lead us to ensure the effective use of the Conference on Disarmament. Thank you for your attention.

**The President:** Thank you, Excellency, for your statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort His Excellency from the Chamber and to welcome our next guest, Her Excellency Ms. Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest, Her Excellency Ms. Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Ms. Linde (Sweden):** Thank you very much. Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, we cannot take a passive stance on the nuclear threat. A worsening global security environment has led to landmark treaties and agreements being abandoned or facing an uncertain future and new nuclear capabilities being developed. Long-established norms are being challenged, as is the integrity of multilateral institutions.

The current polarization and paralysis of multilateral disarmament frameworks are both deeply worrying and dangerous. The absence of trust is moving States further apart from each other in areas where agreement and cooperation are crucial.

This year marks the seventy-fifth commemoration of the nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It should serve as a reminder of the indisputable fact that one single nuclear explosion causes catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

Our collective goal of a world free from nuclear weapons is more relevant than ever – yet it remains distant. Consequently, disarmament and non-proliferation remain a central foreign and security policy priority for the Swedish Government.

Mr. President, we are meeting today in the Council Chamber of the Palais des Nations in Geneva, the seat of the Conference on Disarmament. For well over two decades, this forum has not conducted any negotiations or been able to agree on something

seemingly obvious – its own programme of work. Regrettably, the beginning of this year's session of the Conference has been no exception. Nevertheless, Mr. President, I welcome your announcement, made last Friday, that we may be close to an agreement on the programme of work already this week. I would therefore like to echo your call for common sense to prevail. We have a shared responsibility to revive an ossified disarmament diplomacy.

Mr. President, on 5 March we will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This year also marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Treaty's indefinite extension. It is an historic occasion for a treaty that has served our collective security very well for decades.

The Treaty constitutes the cornerstone of the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. It has been successful in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, laying the foundation for significant reductions in nuclear arsenals and facilitating the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It is truly an impressive achievement.

The 2020 NPT Review Conference will begin in less than two months. It provides an opportunity for States parties to strengthen the Treaty. This opportunity must be seized. I would like to congratulate and warmly welcome Ambassador Zlauvinen, who was recently nominated President-designate of the Review Conference. I am confident that he will steer the States parties in the right direction and will receive full support and cooperation.

Tomorrow, my colleague, the German Minister for Foreign Affairs Heiko Maas, and I will co-chair the Second Ministerial Meeting of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament. The Initiative brings together 16 non-nuclear-weapon States at a high political level. We are united in our engagement to strengthen the Treaty. We strive to mobilize political momentum for an ambitious yet realistic outcome of the Review Conference and beyond, with a particular focus on disarmament.

This should not be interpreted as a lack of engagement on the other pillars of the Treaty. The Review Conference will need a balanced outcome, which includes all three pillars. They are an indispensable part of the Treaty's fabric: important and mutually reinforcing. They all need to be part of a consensus package.

The disarmament-related commitments and obligations from past review conferences, notably in 1995, 2000 and 2010, remain valid. Several are still outstanding and should be implemented urgently.

The main features of the Stockholm Initiative can be described in six headlines:

**Common ground** – The explicit purpose of the Stockholm Initiative is to build political support for a pragmatic and results-oriented disarmament agenda within the framework of the Treaty. The Initiative aims to reach common ground and promote a successful outcome of the NPT Review Conference.

**Compatibility** – The Stockholm Initiative does not seek to replace any other initiative or groupings that already exist. Instead, it seeks to complement others by building broad political support for an ambitious and realistic disarmament agenda. There are many points of convergence where various initiatives and groupings could reinforce each other in the run-up to the Review Conference.

**Composition** – The Stockholm Initiative brings together a quite diverse group of 16 engaged non-nuclear-weapon States. We have different geographic perspectives and security policy profiles. This in itself is a source of strength and credibility, because it requires a degree of internal bridge-building and a constructive mindset, which also must be applied among the broader NPT membership ahead of the Review Conference.

**Collaboration** – The Stockholm Initiative has a collaborative and inclusive approach. It is an initiative open to all States parties to the Treaty – nuclear and non-nuclear States – to engage in a results-oriented dialogue. All States parties must be ready to get out of their comfort zone and engage in a spirit of compromise in order to reach concrete results. I look forward to broad outreach by members of the Initiative in the weeks to come.

Concept – A crucial part of the Stockholm Initiative is the stepping-stone approach, which can be best described as an action-oriented methodology. It takes a new look at the traditional disarmament agenda – in breaking down long-standing items into more digestible parts. It seeks to identify actionable measures which are within reach in the current security environment.

Confidence-building – The Stockholm Initiative also tries to support rebuilding of trust. The absence of trust between States is a major barrier to disarmament progress. The stepping-stone approach seeks to rebuild mutual confidence by engaging key actors in a practical, rather than a normative, incremental process. It seeks to engage States in a cooperative and inclusive process, moving in a positive direction – through concrete steps – towards disarmament.

By identifying and implementing short-term measures, we can mitigate current risk but also pave the way for further steps and progress on nuclear disarmament – this is the essence of the approach. Our meeting in Berlin tomorrow will be the occasion, at ministerial level, to agree upon the political message and the stepping stones we jointly want to bring to the Review Conference.

In the Stockholm Declaration, the founding document of the Initiative, we have already identified potential areas such as:

- More transparent and responsible declaratory policies
- Measures to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in doctrines and policies
- Ways of enhancing transparency and reducing risk of any use of nuclear weapons
- Strengthened negative security assurances
- Work on nuclear disarmament verification
- The importance of addressing the production of fissile material.

From a Swedish perspective, a comprehensive approach should be applied with stepping stones being adopted in each of these mutually reinforcing categories.

What we need is political leadership, constructive engagement on substance and contributions from all States parties. The nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility in this regard.

Mr. President, overcoming the present crisis in strategic arms control is desperately needed. I call upon the United States and Russia to come to an early agreement on the existence of the New START. The New START is a crucial component of global security and would be a key scene-setter for the Review Conference.

I am convinced that progress is possible, even in challenging times. We can – with strong political will and a forward-looking mindset – start a journey of unlocking disarmament diplomacy by delivering upon commitments. We should take the chance. Thank you.

**The President:** Thank you, Ms. Linde, for your statement and for your words of support in the Conference on Disarmament. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Her Excellency Ms. Linde from the Chamber. Our next guest will be Mr. Stef Blok, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest, His Excellency Mr. Stef Blok, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Mr. Blok** (Netherlands): “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” Charles Dickens’s famous first line illuminates the dual reality of life in the late eighteenth century. At the same time, his words aptly describe the current state of world affairs.

Ladies and gentlemen, on one hand, there is a lot to celebrate. For starters, seventy-five years of multilateralism: a marvellous invention that allows countries of the world to communicate with words, not guns. And these 75 years of global teamwork have yielded many other accomplishments as well: 50 years of commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). And more than 40 years of valuable work by the Conference on Disarmament, resulting, for example, in the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. These milestones show that the Conference on Disarmament is a truly multilateral forum where many countries confer and try to move disarmament forward through dialogue and action. They have been important, brave decisions, moments in history when we managed to surpass ourselves, not just by making the right decisions but also by upholding those decisions and carrying on with our efforts.

Unfortunately, there have also been a lot of disappointments. Five years ago, the NPT Review Conference ended with no action plan. The final communiqué was rejected after four weeks of frustrating debate. Two years ago, the United States withdrew from the nuclear deal with Iran. Since then, Iran has been moving in the wrong direction, away from the accord. And a year ago, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was abandoned, following several violations by Russia. And also last year, the United States “unsigned” the Arms Trade Treaty. At all these moments, we proved unable to surpass ourselves. Debate and dialogue stalled.

Even more worrisome, the world became less secure. North Korea has been expanding its nuclear weapons programme. The Indian and Pakistani armed forces have frequently been on high alert. And several countries have been entertaining the idea of developing a nuclear weapon. And there are serious tensions in the Middle East. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres once described the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty as an “invaluable brake on nuclear war”. Yet right now the brakes seem to be off. We find ourselves in a reckless street race with fewer and fewer rules and no brakes. This is not mere rhetorical exaggeration. If the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (the New START) is also allowed to expire, the two largest nuclear Powers will not be bound by any rules or regulations and there will be no brakes.

This is a difficult environment in which we diplomats and negotiators have to do our work. It is a real challenge. But we cannot blame circumstances for our failure to deliver. Not here in this forum or in any other forum. We all know that our discussions here are important. But we also know that they can be frustrating and slow. And that procedural arguments are used to block progress on substantive issues, like negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

In order to move forward, sometimes you need to step back and take stock and rethink. That is why the Netherlands submitted its “Back to basics” working paper. To take a step back. To take stock. And to rethink how we organize the work of this Conference. We hope to build on and expand the momentum this paper has created. And we need to deliver elsewhere, too.

In less than two months’ time, the tenth NPT Review Conference will take place in New York. This is a crucial forum for new proposals and ideas. It is a place to lobby for new initiatives, to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons. I cannot overstate the importance of the Conference. Every five years it gives us the chance to make the right decisions for our futures and safeguard our survival. We only have one global treaty banning the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and there is no alternative. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is the only treaty with a legally binding commitment requiring nuclear-weapon States to pursue negotiations on disarmament. Albert Einstein said, “humans invented the atom bomb, but no mouse in the world would construct a mousetrap”. The atom bomb is an invention we cannot undo. We can only prevent ourselves getting caught in the trap. So at the Review Conference, we need to make the right decisions. Simply saying “the meeting is the message” is not enough. The Review Conference has to be a success, and this requires ambitious realism. We will not reach the finish line this year by any means, but we cannot settle for the status quo. We need to make progress on many fronts.

For example, we must demand that the nuclear-weapon States take action to implement article VI of the Treaty. Yet article VI cannot be implemented without an operational Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and a fissile material cut-off treaty, as well as work on nuclear disarmament verification. Likewise, non-proliferation obligations cannot be met without International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and functioning export controls. And in order to make progress, we need to take responsibility, especially the countries with nuclear weapons. And non-nuclear-weapon States must play a leading role, too, by participating at a high political level. I will thus go to New York myself, and I hope my counterparts will do the same.

As Chair of Main Committee III and a member of the Chairs' Bureau, the Netherlands will do its utmost to make the Review Conference a success. We will also continue working to make the proceedings inclusive and transparent. We are all responsible for the Treaty, and it benefits us all. That is why the Netherlands started organizing regional NPT meetings in 2016.

In order to make progress, we also need to look to the future, and not only at the Review Conference. As we face these best and worst of times, technological development poses new dilemmas and challenges. We are living in a new dual reality. A reality where new technology can make the world a better place and a more dangerous one. It can be a force for good, for all humankind, or a means of destruction, in which the human element has purposely been diminished or even removed – a new mousetrap.

Artificial intelligence poses one such dilemma. Greater speed in data processing, facilitated by artificial intelligence, could have great military benefits. But it could also dangerously reduce decision-making time. In the same vein, increasing automated functions could reduce the risk of human error, but operators still need to be able to understand how the systems they are using work. While we do not know the exact implications of new technologies, we need to discuss their impact, so that we can maximize the potential of human/machine interaction as a force for good, while preventing its use for evil. Right now, we have the power to prevent the creation of new mousetraps. And we have the power to write our own story of a better future. In my view, certain things are non-negotiable. A human element must play a role in any weapon system. And compliance with international law is crucial.

A couple of weeks ago, a heavy storm battered the Netherlands – Ciara, the first Dutch storm with a name. And the press all over the world marvelled at the Dutch “riders in the storm”, cyclists taking part in the Dutch Headwind Cycling Championships. On a bike without gears or frills, in gale-force winds, nowhere to shelter, and on a course 8 1/2 kilometres long – perhaps you have to be really Dutch, a bit crazy, to enter this competition. As one rider said, “it’s like climbing a 10 per cent slope on the worst bike you can imagine”. It is quite a challenge.

So is nuclear disarmament. Not a sprint but a marathon. One that began 75 years ago and is far from over. In the Netherlands, the wind died down many days ago and the crazy Dutch cyclists have long since recovered, but our marathon will continue for decades to come, and despite the headwinds we face it is important for us to keep running in the right direction, even when the finish line is nowhere in sight and we feel exhausted, even when we are discouraged by the resistance to our efforts, because if we give up we will not get anywhere. Thank you.

**The President:** I thank His Excellency Mr. Blok for his statement. I am going to suspend this meeting for a short moment in order to escort His Excellency from the Chamber and to welcome our next guest, His Excellency Mr. Faisal Al-Saud, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest, His Excellency Mr. Faisal Al-Saud, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Al-Saud** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I would like at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference during the current session and wish you every success in carrying out your tasks. I would also like to reaffirm the support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for your efforts to ensure the success of this session. I would like to extend sincere thanks to the permanent representative of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Ambassador Rachid Belbaki, for presiding over the work of the first part of this session and for his efforts to revive the negotiating process and break the deadlock in the Conference. I would like to express my country's appreciation for the efforts of Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shares the concerns of the international community regarding the stalemate in the Conference, which is the only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament issues. Despite the untiring and intense efforts of member States over almost two decades, the Conference has not succeeded in adopting a clear programme of work that would allow it to carry out the tasks for which it was established. Therefore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls for a review of the causes of the Conference's impasse. These causes should be studied transparently and in good faith, avoiding the adoption of unilateral positions that hinder the chances of achieving collective security. All States need to show the necessary flexibility and political will to relaunch the Conference and activate its role so that it can carry out its responsibilities related to the promotion of international peace and security. Expanding the membership of the Conference and admitting new members would have a major impact in activating the mechanisms of the Conference, enhancing its role and allowing it to benefit from the experiences of other countries in the field of disarmament. Accordingly, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls for a review of the accession mechanism to allow States with observer status to join the Conference as full members.

Mr. President, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has paid great attention to international efforts in the field of disarmament and was one of the first countries to accede to international agreements and treaties dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation issues. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia joined the International Atomic Energy Agency, the treaty monitoring body, in 1962. It signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1988 and concluded a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the Agency in 2005. Saudi Arabia has also signed the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. At the national level, it has enacted domestic legislation compatible with the provisions of international agreements and treaties. The Kingdom has established the National Authority for the Implementation of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions to serve as a liaison between the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, relevant stakeholders and States. The Kingdom has also established the Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Commission to implement the agreement relating to the operation of the peaceful national programme.

Mr. President, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is increasingly concerned at the dangers that are threatening the security of the Arab countries in the Gulf region as the threat from armed terrorist groups and militias from Iran escalates. The Iranian regime has supplied these groups with advanced military technologies and ballistic missile technology to target civilian and oil installations in the countries of the region. The cowardly attack on oil facilities in Abqaiq and Khurais in Saudi Arabia posed a serious threat to the security of global oil supplies. As we saw, Saudi Arabia took rapid measures to curb the sharp rise in oil prices and deal with the damages suffered by the oil facilities in record time. In this connection, it should be noted that the Houthi terrorist militias supported by Iran are still engaged in terrorist activities targeting civilian areas in Saudi Arabia. The leadership of the coalition forces succeeded in fending off several ballistic missiles last week that were directed against a number of civilian sites in Saudi Arabia. This comes against the backdrop of international silence over Iranian hostilities that support such operations. We all witnessed the seizure by the United States Navy last week of Iranian ships loaded with weapons and missiles that were en route to the Houthi group.

The challenges created by the irresponsible behaviour of the regime in Iran have led to the emergence of new patterns of threats to international peace and security, as terrorist groups are being provided with drone technology to attack countries in the region, in violation of all international norms and laws that prohibit States from engaging in such behaviour. The announcement by the Iranian regime that it will scale back its compliance with commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, in which it focuses on specific areas and activities that limit its possession of nuclear weapons, is evidence that the Iranian nuclear programme has never been peaceful.

In conclusion, Mr. President, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia looks forward to participating in the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to be held in New York from 27 April and working to make the Conference a success, overcoming the failure of the 2015 Conference and achieving the desired results. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also affirms its support for all efforts aimed at disarmament, and at achieving stability in the region, maintaining international peace and security and tackling the challenges facing both the region and the world. Saudi Arabia calls on the international community to assume its responsibilities to support these efforts and to stand united in facing the challenges being experienced in the region in particular and the world in general. In this context, the Kingdom joins the rest of the Arab countries in calling for the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and urges the sponsoring States to work towards this goal. Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President:** I thank His Excellency Mr. Al-Saud and will now suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort His Excellency from the Chamber and to welcome our next guest, Her Excellency Ms. Arancha González Laya, Minister for Foreign Affairs, the European Union and Cooperation of Spain.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest, Her Excellency Ms. Arancha González Laya, Minister for Foreign Affairs, the European Union and Cooperation of Spain. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Ms. González Laya** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. It is a great honour for me to be back in Geneva and to address you for the first time as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain. I would first like to acknowledge the achievements of the Conference on Disarmament and the efforts that you have made to seek a consensus, particularly in these difficult times for non-proliferation and disarmament.

We are all concerned about security in this turbulent period that is full of uncertainty. On the one hand, the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture that we have been building over the past few decades is being subjected to tensions and scrutiny that pose a collective challenge. The end of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the upsurge in the use of chemical weapons and doubts over the continuity of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and the Treaty on Open Skies are examples of these tensions, which, in the opinion of Spain, do not help to create a global climate of security. Mention might also be made of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action established with Iran, which Spain, in common with our European partners, wishes to preserve as an important part of this architecture.

These tensions are also accompanied by fresh challenges thrown up by new technological developments that concern us, including emerging technologies, cyberthreats and autonomous weapons, all of which are now part of the current landscape and must be addressed. Furthermore, the risk posed by the possibility that non-State actors, such as terrorist groups, might gain access to conventional weapons or weapons of mass destruction requires us to take collective responsibility for equipping ourselves with the instruments needed to ensure our citizens' security. It is a question of putting people's lives first and avoiding a new arms race, which we thought had been overcome and which affects us all.

Multilateralism is one of the key aspects of the foreign policy of Spain. We believe that interdependence requires global solutions. It is more necessary than ever that the

forums that have served to resolve our differences for over half a century should continue to play this indispensable role. Responsibility for building bridges to ensure the continuity of the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture must be shared. For this reason, I would like to reiterate the commitment of Spain to the Conference. We know that the Conference has faced difficulties in recent years but we are convinced that, even in difficult times, it has an intrinsic value that we should not forget.

For over forty years, since 1979, the Conference has been the only forum where the most important States in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament have been continually present to listen to and address the international community on issues crucial to global stability. Amid the uncertainty that is rife in 2020, the importance of the Conference's resilience as a forum where joint responsibility is assumed for maintaining international peace and security is more important than ever.

We believe in an order based on international law and multilateralism. That is why Spain conscientiously assumes its commitments to the non-proliferation and disarmament forums, of which we are an active member. Our ambition is to ensure that the main treaties in this area have universal scope. I referred earlier to concern over the upsurge in the use of chemical weapons. I would like to reiterate our firm condemnation of any use of these prohibited weapons by any person, whatever his or her motivation or situation may be. The international community must react firmly to ensure that persons who use such weapons do not go unpunished. Thanks to this Conference, we now have the necessary mechanisms to make this possible. We support the work being carried out by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and are convinced that it has the capacity and the rigour required to address this threat.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is another clear example of an institution that plays an essential role in ensuring nuclear safety regimes and safeguards. I would also like to acknowledge the important contribution made by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization to global peace and stability. The Treaty's entry into force is one of the key pending issues in the field of non-proliferation and Spain is confident that it will soon be fully operational.

Although work remains to be done, progress has been made and in that regard I cannot fail to mention that the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons, which has our full support, was finally held last November.

Two historic milestones in the field of international relations and disarmament may be highlighted: the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the fiftieth anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which are both clear examples of the great benefits that multilateralism at its best can bring for the peace and stability of States and their citizens.

In May, our ability to reach a consensus will be put to the test at the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in which Spain will participate in an open and proactive spirit. Spain is well known for having one of the strictest safeguard regimes and we therefore call for the universal ratification of the Treaty. Our commitment to it is total and unequivocal and we therefore call on the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their commitments under its article VI. We are aware of the international security context and will therefore continue to work on concrete measures aimed at ensuring full compliance with the Treaty. Tomorrow, the ministerial meeting of the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament will be held in Berlin, where 16 countries will aim to identify incremental and realistic measures that we hope will contribute to reaching a much-needed consensus at the 2020 Review Conference.

The challenges that lie ahead are not insignificant but we must ensure that our efforts are focused on our citizens. As I said earlier, we all share the same concerns over our security and the prevailing climate of uncertainty. It is in this forum that we must unite around our trust in consensus. This confidence is the asset that we must preserve and in this regard you can always count on the support of Spain. Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President:** I would like to thank Ms. González Laya for her statement. Allow me to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Her Excellency from the

Chamber and to welcome our next guest, His Excellency Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest, His Excellency Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Mr. Tileuberdi (Kazakhstan):** Thank you. I would like to congratulate Ambassador Foradori of Argentina on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to note the work of the previous President, Ambassador Rashid Belbaki of Algeria. I wish furthermore to express our support for the recent statement by the six Presidents aimed at adopting a programme of work this year.

Ladies and gentlemen, 2020 is a special year for multilateral diplomacy. In the year of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), it is important to emphasize that only by joint efforts can we achieve a world free of nuclear threats.

I would like to note that exactly 25 years ago, the last nuclear warheads were removed from our country and the last nuclear explosive device was destroyed at the Semipalatinsk testing site. Thus, Kazakhstan voluntarily renounced its nuclear weapons – the fourth largest arsenal in the world.

The first President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, speaking at the United Nations in September 2015, called upon all Member States to make the world free of nuclear weapons in the twenty-first century. He proposed to eliminate the nuclear menace by the year 2045 to mark the centennial anniversary of the creation of the United Nations. In his manifesto “The world: the twenty-first century”, Nursultan Nazarbayev offered a realistic view on the world that is based on unity, not division, on cooperation, not rivalry. There will be no winners in any modern war, he stated. These words are especially relevant today.

It is critically important to maintain and strengthen the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral forum for disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We urge all members to demonstrate political will and overcome differences to start substantive work. The core principle of the Conference is consensus. It is only through consensus that we can ensure the universality of our decisions. In order to revitalize the work of the Conference, we are ready to consider a review of working methods without prejudice to the principle of consensus. We also welcome the expansion of the Conference membership. I believe that broader participation of States in the disarmament process will provide a new impetus to the work of the Conference.

Mr. President, nuclear disarmament is the most important goal. The complexity of this issue involves a consideration of different factors in the course of negotiations. Enormous nuclear arsenals make the world less safe and less predictable. Two of the three fundamental arms control treaties to which Kazakhstan was a party – the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty – have ceased to exist. The prospects for extending the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms remain uncertain. These developments put us decades back to a very dangerous red line. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, speaking of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, highlighted the increased nuclear threat.

The conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty will help to minimize the chances of new military nuclear programmes being developed, significantly improve the control of existing material and reduce the risk of nuclear terrorism. In addition, it will serve as a confidence-building measure.

It is imperative to intensify further deliberations on the prevention of an arms race in outer space by involving other relevant international forums. We can use the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space as a basis for future negotiations. In this regard, Kazakhstan hosted open expert consultations to develop

practical measures for prevention of an arms race in outer space on the sidelines of the international forum Space Days in November last year.

As a party to the Treaty of Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan supports the development of an international legally binding document on negative security assurances. The willingness of States and regions to declare themselves nuclear-free is welcome and should be encouraged. Only such assurances can prevent non-nuclear States from obtaining nuclear weapons as a guarantee of their own security. At the same time, new challenges and threats to international security should not be ignored by the members of the Conference.

Mr. President, Kazakhstan firmly supports the key role of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a cornerstone of international security and calls for strict compliance by both nuclear and non-nuclear States with their obligations. The upcoming 2020 NPT Review Conference should not only reaffirm the decisions of the previous Conferences but also yield specific tasks for the next cycle. In this regard, the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones and strengthening cooperation between the existing ones can serve as tangible outcomes of the Review Conference.

As you may know, in 2017, our first President Nursultan Nazarbayev put forward an initiative on convening a meeting of representatives of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Kazakhstan convened such a meeting last August to discuss ways to foster cooperation and enhance consultations among these free zones. We also hope that the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, launched in November 2019, will be successful.

We call for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and support the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization's efforts to find new approaches to this crucial task.

Last year, on 29 August, the International Day against Nuclear Tests, Kazakhstan became a party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We consider the Treaty complementary to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. I would also like to note that this February, Kazakhstan ratified the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare.

Ladies and gentlemen, in his speech at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, reiterated that achieving a world free of nuclear weapons remains a top priority for our country. Nuclear weapons are no longer an advantage, but a threat to the global peace and stability. Thank you for your attention.

**The President:** I thank His Excellency Mr. Tileuberdi for his statement. Allow me now to suspend this meeting for a short moment in order to escort His Excellency from the Chamber and to welcome our next guest this morning, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ali Alhakim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend my warm welcome to our guest, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ali Alhakim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Mr. Alhakim (Iraq) (spoke in Arabic):** Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, many thanks for the kind words of welcome. I am pleased to join you in this international multilateral forum to confirm the importance that the Republic of Iraq attaches to the Conference on Disarmament and its commitment to the ideals of multilateralism that enhance the credibility of the collective responsibility of the international community in its efforts to achieve the goal of general and complete disarmament.

Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament is growing in importance at this sensitive time in light of the increase in regional crises and political tensions internationally and the exacerbation of the risk of possible proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, all of which endanger international and regional stability. Although the Conference has been unable to exercise its negotiating mandate on disarmament treaties for more than two decades, it retains its importance as the sole international negotiating forum on

disarmament. In this context, Iraq welcomes all initiatives and activities aimed at enabling the Conference to resume the exercise of the mandate entrusted to it; it also welcomes the spirit of cooperation among the six Presidents of this year's Conference and their determined efforts to reach an agreement to adopt a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that meets the concerns of all member States and ensures progress on the issues on the Conference's agenda, with a view to advancing the objectives for which this Conference was established.

Mr. President, the continuing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament has led to many disarmament issues being addressed outside the framework of the Conference because member States have stuck to their positions and failed to show the necessary flexibility, hindering any progress in this area. Consequently, all member States need to make a serious effort to allow the Conference to return to its proper role. We would like to emphasize the need for continued joint efforts to participate constructively and effectively in the Conference and to contribute more to the disarmament meetings that will take place this year, in particular the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons scheduled for May.

Mr. President, Iraq shares the view of many States that nuclear disarmament should remain a top priority for the Conference, in line with the special status accorded to it in the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, and the conclusions of the International Court of Justice in its 1996 advisory opinion. I would like to clarify the position of Iraq concerning the main issues on the agenda of the Conference and in particular the four items related to the programme of work.

First, on nuclear disarmament: the technological advances in this field will increase the risk of nuclear weapons persisting. Iraq therefore supports all efforts and negotiations among the nuclear-weapon States to achieve a serious reduction in nuclear weapons and eventually a world free of nuclear weapons. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones would also contribute to strengthening international efforts towards nuclear disarmament. Iraq supports the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We therefore call on all the remaining States listed in annex 2 of the Treaty to take the necessary measures and follow the procedures to sign and ratify the Treaty.

Second, with regard to negative security assurances, the need for a binding international legal instrument should be agreed on, whereby the nuclear-weapon States would give unconditional assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons.

Third, the continued production of fissile material jeopardizes the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Accordingly, Iraq supports the idea of achieving a negotiating mandate on the development of a non-discriminatory, multilateral, internationally and effectively verifiable treaty to ban the production of fissile material.

Fourth, Iraq shares the view of other member States that outer space is a common heritage of humankind and should be explored for peaceful purposes only. Its militarization would lead to a costly and destructive arms race that must be prevented. The Conference on Disarmament should consider the issue of adopting a binding international instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space. We reiterate our support for any international initiatives aimed at promoting the peaceful and equitable use of outer space.

Mr. President, attaining the goal of creating a world free of nuclear weapons depends first and foremost on achieving universal ratification and comprehensive implementation of the Treaty on the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the first step towards reaching this goal is the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world as important progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. We therefore call on the international community to implement the Resolution on the Middle East of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in accordance with the action plan contained in the final document of the 2010 Review Conference, as an essential element in this regard.

Iraq also expresses its disappointment at the failure of the 2015 Review Conference to adopt a final document. In this context, Iraq welcomed the organization of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which was held at United Nations headquarters in New York in November 2019. Iraq also welcomed the results and outputs of the Conference. An objective and balanced agenda and a comprehensive programme of work were adopted, and a final declaration was issued confirming the objectives of the Conference. The holding of the Conference marked a step towards achieving the goal of establishing a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and reinforces other parallel efforts aimed at establishing such a zone.

Mr. President, Iraq supports a return to negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme based on equitable participation for all parties that would guarantee security and peace in our region and reduce the tension caused by the withdrawal of the United States from the deal. At the same time, Iraq supports the efforts of the European States that participated in the negotiations that led to a satisfactory agreement for all parties in 2015 and urges them to continue working to return all parties to the negotiating table because we believe that negotiations are the only and the best solution. The worsening situation and rising tensions do not serve all States in the region.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we take this opportunity to express our great appreciation for the efforts of the Presidents of the Conference this year in their endeavours to restore the Conference on Disarmament to its true role in addressing disarmament and non-proliferation issues. You can count on Iraq to support you in your endeavours. We wish you and the other Presidents success in carrying out your duties. Thank you very much.

**The President:** I thank His Excellency Mr. Alhakim for his statement and will now suspend the meeting for a moment in order to escort His Excellency from the Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** That concludes our business for this morning. The next meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will take place this afternoon at 3 p.m. We will hear the addresses of distinguished guests from Finland, Egypt, Cuba, Qatar, Brazil, Ireland, India and Belarus. The meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.*