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


Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Wednesday, 26 February 2020, at 9.45 a.m.

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

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**The President:** I call to order the 1535th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, at the start of this morning's meeting I wish to give the floor to the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as these are the two countries that I had on my list of speakers at the end of yesterday's plenary and whose delegations we could not hear due to the technical problem with the audio. After these countries have exercised their right of reply, we will continue to hear the high-level speakers, with statements from Slovenia, South Africa, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Sudan. I then intend to allow the representative of Indonesia to repeat the statement delivered yesterday, which we could not hear fully, due to the aforementioned technical problem. Last, I will give the floor to any delegation that wishes to exercise the right of reply. I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

**Ms. Bauman** (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. Could I ask for a slight delay, as my Deputy Permanent Representative is running slightly late? Perhaps the other delegate could speak first.

**The President:** Yes. The distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran has the floor.

**Mr. Azadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President, and good morning to all colleagues. Mr. President, although it is not our custom to argue with those who have a habit of parroting absurd allegations against Iran, I should remind everyone that it is not Iran that has been accumulating beautiful weapons. Iran has been under an arms embargo for a decade and it uses its money for more important things than buying beautiful weapons to murder innocent people in neighbouring countries and supporting extremist and terrorist groups.

The Saudi minister should be reminded that it is not Iran that has been massacring innocent Yemeni civilians for five years. It is not Iran that exports extremist ideology, wreaks havoc in other countries, or takes other countries' prime ministers hostage. Saudis should recognize that we are perpetual neighbours and should respect the principle of good neighbourliness. Blaming others for your own mistakes and mischief will not resolve your problem. If you have not been able to shatter the will of the Yemeni people through five years of brutal killing and starvation, you should not blame Iran. If we sympathize with the innocent children that have been killed and maimed by your war machine, you should not misrepresent that sympathy as a cause of your failure. One other thing: having might and means does not give you the right to kill in so cowardly a manner your poor innocent brothers and sisters in order to prove your supremacy.

Mr. President, there is also serious concern regarding the lack of balance between the ambitious nuclear programme of Saudi Arabia and its international commitment to non-proliferation. Saudi Arabia continues to refuse to fully implement its safeguard agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, concluded on the basis of INFCIRC/153; to allow the Agency to conduct inspections; and to provide full declarations about its nuclear activities. More alarmingly, the Crown Prince and other members of the Saudi royal family are on record as stating that they may have an interest in acquiring nuclear weapons at some point in the future. Saudi Arabia must build international confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme by fully abiding with non-proliferation standards and commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and by unequivocally renouncing the option of acquiring nuclear weapons.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of the United States of America.

**Ms. Plath** (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. Sorry I was late this morning. Thank you for giving me the floor once again. I will repeat my statement from yesterday and hopefully finish today. I appreciate that we have an opportunity to revisit this.

My delegation took the floor to exercise its right of reply following the misleading and inflammatory statement from the Russian Federation, which again accepts no responsibility for the demise of agreements such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces

Treaty and deflects the blame for the woes of the world entirely onto a single nation. If only the world were that simple.

Mr. President, before Russia accuses anyone of implementing an aggressive, egocentric foreign policy, perhaps they should ask their neighbour Ukraine what they think of the self-proclaimed non-aggressive foreign policy of Russia. Let me be clear, regardless of whether it is the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, the United States will not be the sole compliant party to any treaty. I will not rehash in this room the numerous and egregious Russian violations of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty but I will say, and please heed this, that the United States will not enter into, extend or renew any treaty whose compliance is not fully verifiable and equally respected by all parties. For treaties and arms control agreements to meet any threshold of credibility, there must be full compliance by all parties. Furthermore, speaking of an evolving security environment in which Russia and China continue to develop and build up their nuclear arsenals, no treaty would effectively address these growing security challenges and it would be short-sighted and irresponsible at best if a new security treaty did not include Russia and China. The United States will not disadvantage its own national security for the benefit of Russia and China. Frankly, on the heels of the successful meeting in London of the five permanent members of the Security Council, followed by what I believe has been a very constructive high-level segment here this week, the United States is deeply disappointed that the Russian Federation would deliver such a petulant and defensive statement assigning blame everywhere but where it lies: with Russia itself. Only when Russia is prepared to accept its role in compliance with these treaties that it claims so desperately to respect, will we be able to rebuild trust and look to a new multipolar security environment. Perhaps then Russia will find a response to those generous overtures it claims to be waiting for.

Mr. President, we seek to look forward. We must all be realistic about the current security strategic environment, develop new and creative solutions – as those who came before us did with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty – and address the challenges that face us today as they are, not as we remember them or as we wish them to be. To that end, the United States stands ready and willing to invite Russia and China to participate in a genuine, timely and relevant arms control discussion. An invitation to which we, too, are still waiting for an answer.

Turning to Iran, our goal remains, as we have always stated, to achieve a deal that comprehensively addresses the full range of threats posed by Iran, including its destabilizing regional activities, its development and proliferation of ballistic missiles and its nuclear programme. An agreement that does not address this full range of capabilities will only briefly hobble its activities and its nuclear aspirations. To achieve that, though, Iran must be willing to operate like a normal country, change its malign behaviour and take lasting steps to demonstrate that its nuclear programme is, and will always be, peaceful. Unfortunately, while my President has said we are open to diplomacy with Iran, Iran has continued to meet our diplomacy with violence.

Mr. President, to use the words of the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister yesterday, the only people who are “systematically violating” anything are the Iranians. The discontinuation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the fact that Iran remains subject to sanctions is purely the fault of Iran. Like Russia, perhaps Iran should stop looking to lay blame on others and should accept responsibility for its actions and their consequences.

**The President:** Thank you, distinguished representative of the United States of America. We shall now continue with the high-level segment. Allow me, at this stage, to suspend the meeting to welcome our first distinguished guest, His Excellency Mr. Matej Marn, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** This meeting is resumed. Distinguished colleagues, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our first distinguished guest of today, Mr. Matej Marn, Deputy

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Mr. Marn** (Slovenia): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the duties of the President of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to express my country's full support for your endeavours to effectively guide the work of the Conference.

Mr. President, Slovenia shares the concern of the Secretary-General of the United Nations over the progressive erosion of our disarmament instruments. In the past year, we have witnessed the end of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the progressive weakening of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the looming uncertainty surrounding the extension of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.

We have repeatedly expressed our concern at the withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the reduction by Iran of its commitments. In our view, the nuclear deal is a vital part of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and needs to be preserved. In this connection, I urge Iran to return to full compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action without delay and call on all parties to put serious efforts into the further implementation of this important international agreement. I would also like to reiterate my country's full support for the International Atomic Energy Agency in its ongoing professional and impartial work in verifying and monitoring the implementation of the nuclear deal.

Nevertheless, my country is convinced that this negative trend in nuclear arms control and disarmament can be reversed. Extending the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty would be an excellent beginning. We attach the highest importance to its extension and encourage the United States and the Russian Federation to seek further reductions to their arsenals.

Mr. President, I am confident that the rules-based international order, with multilateralism as its key principle, is at the heart of our common interests. In the view of Slovenia, the Conference is one of the central disarmament forums and it has the potential to preserve and further advance effective treaty-based international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. In this connection, it is vital to ensure that substantive work of the Conference can commence. Additionally, Slovenia supports the urgent revision of the Conference's working methods.

We are convinced that the full participation of the countries that are waiting to become members, including my own, would bring a new momentum to the Conference's work. In this context, we strongly support the proposal to appoint a coordinator to explore issues related to the expansion of the Conference's membership. We are deeply concerned at the fact that one European Union member State was prevented from participating as an observer in the work of the Conference in 2020.

Our focus this year will be to ensure a successful outcome of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. For Slovenia, the Treaty is the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We firmly believe that the Treaty's three pillars cannot mutually reinforce each other if its provisions are not implemented in their entirety. This includes achieving concrete progress towards the full implementation of article VI, with the ultimate goal of totally eliminating nuclear weapons. We believe this noble goal can be achieved with a progressive approach, focused on concrete steps and tangible results.

With this in mind, Slovenia calls for the full implementation of the 2010 Review Conference action plan, including the action that calls for the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons.

Without a doubt, one of the vital steps towards a nuclear-weapon-free world is also a comprehensive ban on nuclear-weapon testing. In this connection, Slovenia calls on all States which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; in particular those States whose ratification is needed for the Treaty to take effect.

Slovenia also supports the diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions, ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay and return to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to reassure you that Slovenia will continue to promote and support gender equality in international forums. We are convinced that the equal participation and leadership of women and men in non-proliferation and disarmament are vital for achieving lasting peace and security.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Marn for his statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort His Excellency from the Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, His Excellency Mr. Alvin Botes, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Mr. Botes (South Africa):** Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address this august body. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, during 2020 we will be commemorating a number of milestones, including the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, but more importantly the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the twenty-fifth anniversary of its indefinite extension. This year also marks 75 years since the first use of nuclear weapons and the witnessing of their catastrophic consequences.

Mr. President, it must be recalled that the very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly, in 1946, called for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons. Consequently, we developed the NPT, whose preamble emphasizes "the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war". South Africa continues to view the NPT as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The NPT represents a historical bargain between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States, whereby the former have undertaken to eliminate their nuclear weapons based on a reciprocal undertaking by the latter not to pursue nuclear weapons.

However, Mr. President, while non-proliferation measures have been strengthened, similar concrete progress has not yet been realized in the area of nuclear disarmament. South Africa therefore believes that efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons should be matched by a concurrent effort to eliminate all nuclear weapons in a verifiable and irreversible manner.

South Africa likewise remains seriously concerned about the apparent lack of urgency and seriousness with which solemn undertakings, particularly in respect of nuclear disarmament, continue to be approached. Still more concerning are attempts to negate or reinterpret the nuclear disarmament undertakings made since the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

While reductions are important, they do not substitute concrete, transparent, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament measures. Ongoing modernization programmes, including in relation to delivery systems, make it clear that some States still wish to retain these instruments of destruction indefinitely, contrary to their legal obligations and political commitments. This undermines the NPT bargain and also the non-proliferation norms established by the Treaty.

As we move towards the 2020 Review Conference, it is imperative that we take stock of the progress made towards the implementation of all provisions of the NPT and the solemn commitments made in that regard. The view of South Africa is that the starting point for the Review Conference needs to be the reaffirmation of the unequivocal undertaking towards nuclear disarmament and the principles emanating from the previous

Review Conferences, including the principles of transparency, irreversibility and verifiability, which should apply to all nuclear disarmament, nuclear arms reduction and arms control measures. Any future outcome should not roll back or reinterpret the agreements reached during the 1995, 2000 and 2010 review conferences, which remain valid and should be fully implemented. Concrete progress on these agreements will be essential to the 2020 review cycle. We should not become complacent about the threat posed by nuclear weapons and the lack of full implementation of the disarmament obligations flowing from article VI. The provisions of the NPT and the outcomes of the review conferences must be respected to maintain the continued vitality of this important legal instrument.

Mr. President, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was but one piece of work to lead us towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. It complements other international instruments by contributing to the fulfilment of nuclear disarmament obligations under the NPT and the objectives of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the various treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, such as the Treaty of Pelindaba, which bans nuclear weapons in Africa. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons includes different pathways for the accession of States possessing or hosting nuclear weapons, when they are ready, through a time-bound, verifiable and irreversible process of nuclear disarmament. It does not spell out all the details of such a process, but rather allows for further negotiations on these arrangements to be agreed upon when the States in question are ready to accede. While the doors to this Treaty have always been open, some have chosen to abdicate leadership and to not participate in it. However, the Treaty is drafted in a manner sensitive to their needs and anticipates what they will require when they join.

The General Assembly, at its first special session devoted to disarmament, considered the significant role that can be played by appropriate international machinery designed to deal with the problems of disarmament. Consequently, we are here today before the Conference on Disarmament, which was established as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the entire international community. It is regrettable that even though we have a body that is mandated to negotiate multilateral disarmament instruments, it has not discharged its basic mandate for 24 years.

It is the view of South Africa that there are several items on the Conference's agenda that are ready for negotiations, including a fissile material cut-off treaty, a treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and other effective measures towards nuclear disarmament. The groups of government experts on these issues, in their discussions and reports, have displayed a positive inclination for negotiations. There is therefore no reason why any or all of these issues cannot be subjected to negotiations in the Conference, especially given the complexities of each of these areas, which may take time to resolve. South Africa does not believe that the conclusion of such instruments could in any way jeopardize the national security measures and interests of any State. On the contrary, new norms in these areas can only serve to strengthen international and regional peace and security. In addition, the mere act of negotiation can also help to rebuild trust among States, something that in our view is desperately needed.

While we regret that the Conference has not been able to fulfil its mandate for the last 24 years, it is our hope that the efforts to reach consensus on a programme of work and to start negotiations can continue. We have no doubt that this will require increased flexibility by all Conference members and willingness to move beyond narrow interests. At the same time, we must guard against conferring on the Conference a deliberative mandate, as opposed to a negotiating mandate, noting that the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament made a clear distinction between the machinery for deliberation and the machinery for negotiation. Reinterpretation of past agreements, such as the the Final Document, is contributing to the impasse in the Conference, owing to the inflexibility of members to fulfil the mandate in line with the Final Document.

In conclusion, Mr. President, as the Nobel Prize laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, "disarmament is not an option for Governments to take up or ignore. It is a moral duty owed by them to their citizens and to humanity as a whole. We must not await another

Hiroshima or Nagasaki before finally mustering the political will to banish these weapons from global arsenals.” The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons must spur disarmament efforts and make the use of nuclear weapons unthinkable. The credibility of multilateral bodies and the sanctity of the agreements and commitments from multilateral processes have to be respected and protected to preserve the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

While the primary responsibility for taking the necessary steps for the elimination of nuclear weapons lies with the nuclear-weapon States, all of us must play our part to achieve our common goal. It is therefore incumbent upon all States to engage without further delay in an accelerated process of negotiations that will ultimately lead to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

**The President:** Thank you, Excellency, for your statement. Allow me now to briefly suspend the meeting so that His Excellency Mr. Botes can be escorted from the Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** This meeting is resumed. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our next distinguished guest, His Excellency Mr. Alexander Yáñez Deleuze, Vice-Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the Ministry of People’s Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor.

**Mr. Yáñez Deleuze** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. My greetings to all delegates and diplomat colleagues present here. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela congratulates the Republic of Argentina on its assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at its 2020 session.

The 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be an opportunity to assess the status of implementation of the political and legal commitments made regarding non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Venezuela has resolutely adopted, is the legally binding general arms control instrument with the largest number of adherents. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has made fervent calls for its commitments to be met.

Venezuela, as a non-nuclear-weapon State and with its diplomacy of peace based on Bolivarian ideals, is calling for the implementation of article VI of the Treaty, whereby States parties undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The Treaty recognizes the intrinsic link between non-proliferation and general and complete disarmament. We welcome efforts to eliminate all nuclear weapons – a commitment made by nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States. In 2020, in parallel with the NPT Review Conference, the Conference on Disarmament has the obligation to pave the way to a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons, in line with article VI of the Treaty.

This will only be possible if the political will of States to recognize disarmament priorities and to negotiate and effectively commit to fulfilling their obligations prevails. The NPT Review Conference must work in this direction. The security environment must not hold back progress in nuclear disarmament. Venezuela is convinced that disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, combined with the intensification of measures to promote and restore trust, can help reduce existing tensions. There is a need, now more than ever, to make the most of the existing potential in the entire scope and capacities of the disarmament machinery.

All of the speakers before me emphasized the importance of this Conference and its uniqueness as the sole body with a specific mandate for negotiating legally binding disarmament instruments. It has enough potential to proceed immediately in this direction. It is imperative to start negotiations on binding instruments banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, with specific provisions for the verification of

stockpiles of such weapons, the prevention of a potential arms race in outer space and negative security assurances.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a proponent of general disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear weapons and, accordingly, it calls on the Conference to revitalize its mission by urgently adopting a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that reflects disarmament-related priorities. It is clear that the deadlock in this Conference – which has lasted for more than 20 years – is not due to shortcomings in its working methods or rules of procedure. The evidence indicates that the Conference has not made any progress towards fulfilling its mandate in recent years because one delegation, motivated by supremacist intentions, has made the negotiation of legally binding documents contingent upon a review of the working methods. The Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention were successfully conceived under these same rules.

Only the total elimination of nuclear weapons can ensure the self-preservation of humanity. Venezuela supports all initiatives aimed at achieving general and complete disarmament. It believes that such weapons are antithetical to human existence and life on the planet. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is in favour of any regional measure that may contribute to the creation of a universal multilateral commitment to disarmament.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a zone of peace, free from nuclear weapons, as established in the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco and declared at the Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in Havana, Cuba, in 2014. The Heads of State and Government present at that Summit made a commitment not to allow or provide scope for any build-up of nuclear or other similar weapons of devastation. Nuclear-weapon-free zones are an effective means of affirming the idea of a global ban.

Venezuela invites all regions to make a determined effort to reflect this fundamental international value and vigorously condemn any attempt to promote or facilitate any form of arms build-up. We call for the elimination of nuclear weapons and their role in strategic defence doctrines, security policies and military strategies. The concept of security based on the promotion and development of military alliances, which are founded on dissuasion and the threat of using nuclear weapons, cannot be maintained.

It is alarming that military bases are being established in non-nuclear-weapon States through regional defence agreements and treaties, meaning that even those States are forced to adhere to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence espoused by nuclear-weapon States. Venezuela commends those nuclear-weapon States that have expressed their willingness to make concrete efforts to build an atmosphere of trust and cooperation.

Accordingly, my country supports the proposal and initiatives put forward by Russia and China to prevent an arms race in outer space. As a peace-loving country, we call on States to support this proposal to avoid the proliferation of weapons in outer space. In 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, to which Venezuela is a party, was adopted by two thirds of United Nations Member States. This Treaty constitutes a step forward in the nuclear disarmament regime and seeks to preserve the human species.

My delegation is concerned by the policies pursued by certain imperialist powers that are attempting, through the practice of unilateralism, to violate the sovereignty and political independence of States, thereby undermining peace, development and international solidarity. These Powers wage war against and invade developing countries in order to appropriate and ruthlessly exploit their natural resources. We are at a difficult juncture in history. Multilateralism is being challenged by imperialist and genocidal Powers that seek to impose their hegemony, even by force and acts of war. By taking this path, they are showing brazen disrespect for the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental norms of international law.

The year 2020 started with an attack by a nuclear-possessor State against a non-possessor State. A great Iranian military leader and a key figure in the fight against terrorism, General Soleimani, was assassinated in violation of the most basic principles of international law. It was a blatant act of State terrorism that created new regional tensions. Similarly, Venezuela is suffering from illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed by the



United States Government that have caused death, pain and suffering among the Venezuelan people. These measures are tantamount to crimes against humanity. The Government of President Nicolás Maduro has therefore lodged a complaint with the International Criminal Court. We hope that those guilty of these crimes will pay.

This Conference is the appropriate forum to strengthen initiatives that contribute to building a consensus with respect to the production of legally binding instruments aimed at preventing an arms race, averting nuclear war, protecting non-nuclear-weapon States and prohibiting the placement and use of weapons in space. Venezuela reaffirms the importance of promoting multilateralism as a fundamental principle of disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations. It therefore reaffirms the importance of convening a fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament. It remains the most appropriate forum to pursue the priorities set by the first special session, including nuclear disarmament, which is the top priority for the international community.

The Conference on Disarmament can no longer delay the start of its substantive work. The validity, and even the relevance, of this forum will be determined by how soon we embark upon this task. We should start by reaching an agreement on the programme of work and a schedule of activities. We trust that, in 2020, the Conference will be able to make progress towards building the consensus required to ensure international peace and security.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Yáñez Deleuze for his statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment so that His Excellency might be escorted from the Chamber.

*The meeting was briefly suspended.*

**The President:** The meeting is resumed. I would now like to invite His Excellency Mr. Osman Abufatima Adam Mohammed, Ambassador, Chargé d'affaires and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Sudan to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, to address the Conference on Disarmament. Thank you, Excellency, for addressing the Conference. You have the floor.

**Mr. Mohammed (Sudan):** Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, at the outset allow me to congratulate Argentina on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is a great honour to address the Conference today in my capacity as President of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This Sunday, 1 March 2020, marks the twenty-first anniversary of the entry into force of this landmark humanitarian and disarmament instrument. Twenty-one years is a significant period and therefore it is timely to pause and take stock of what has transpired during this time.

As we noted during the Fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, held last November in Oslo, the anti-landmine movement continues to progress towards its goals. One hundred and sixty-four States have now made a solid commitment to ending the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines.

Of course, ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines means more than achieving the universal acceptance of conventions. We must also make sure to clear all mined areas, to destroy all stocks and to assist the victims. Significant progress has been made in these areas in the 20 years since the Convention's entry into force.

Mr. President, 31 States parties have now complied with their obligations to identify mined areas and to destroy all anti-personnel mines within them. In addition, one State party, Chile, has confirmed that it will conclude its mine clearance efforts in 2020.

With regard to the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, since the Convention's entry into force, the States parties collectively have destroyed approximately 53 million stockpiled mines.

With regard to victim assistance, the link between the Convention's promise to assist landmine survivors and the relevant human rights framework was strengthened

through interactions with legal frameworks related to the rights of persons with disabilities and with the health, education, employment and development sectors.

Moreover, one of the leaders of this movement, Norway, led the work of the Fourth Review Conference last year, culminating in the adoption of the Oslo Action Plan (APLC/CONF/2019/5), which will guide States parties in the implementation of the Convention over the next five years.

Mr. President, allow me to seize this opportunity to appeal to all members of the Conference that have not yet joined the Convention to do so as soon as possible. In addition, I would ask all States to renew their efforts to implement the Convention. I will be working closely with regional organizations across the world towards the universalization of the Convention. To that end, the recent initiative of the African Union, “Silencing the Guns by 2020”, will pave the way for me to forge working relations with this important and vibrant organization during our presidency.

Our Convention is historic and our progress has been tremendous, but more work needs to be done. Let us work together to achieve our collective and ultimate goal of a world free of mines by 2025.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to make a few remarks about my own country, Sudan. First and foremost, allow me to express our gratitude for your acceptance of the request of Sudan to join the Conference as an observer. At a time when Sudan presides over the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, this is a step forward in the country’s efforts towards disarmament. Sudan is engaged in disarmament efforts in our region, such as a bilateral collaboration with Chad on the clearance of landmines in border areas. We are working to finalize an agreement very soon.

As you may be aware, Sudan recently witnessed a political transformation following a popular revolution which called for freedom, peace and justice. The transitional Government that was established is determined to make fundamental positive changes in the country. A peacemaking process has been launched as a matter of priority, involving all armed groups, and some agreements have already been signed as that process moves forward. The transitional Government is working to open humanitarian corridors through mine action. This effort will help many areas to develop and prosper and will allow those displaced by previous conflicts to return safely to their homes.

Let us continue our collective work to move closer to our ultimate goal, in greater numbers and with a solid commitment that we will sustain until the job is done. I thank you, Mr. President.

**The President:** I thank His Excellency for his statement. I understand that the distinguished Ambassador of Indonesia has decided not to repeat his statement from yesterday. So, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, there have been requests for the floor to exercise the right of reply. The first delegation on my list is Turkey.

**Mr. Güneş** (Turkey): Thank you very much indeed, Mr. President. Having listened to the distinguished high-level officials and having heard some of their comments on observer status and enlargement, I would like to exercise my right of reply as follows:

Mr. President, in the meetings of 21 and 28 January 2020, we put forward in detail our reasoning concerning one request for observer status and we provided the secretariat with our statements to be uploaded on the website. We will gladly provide any interested delegations with further information, as we stated before.

Concerning the enlargement and membership of the Conference on Disarmament, I would simply refer to my delegation’s interventions in this chamber, either in informal or formal meetings. Obviously, the time has not yet come for the Conference to take action on this matter, given that it still is unable to resume its substantive work in line with its original mandate and it has difficulty in reaching consensus, even on simple matters, with its existing structure and membership.

**The President:** Thank you. The second delegation on my list that wishes to exercise its right of reply is the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Han** Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. During the high-level segment, we heard many delegations talking about the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Some delegations related this issue to my country and other countries. My opinion on the matter is that had the United States of America never developed a nuclear weapon, and had several other countries not followed suit, the Treaty would never have come into existence. If that were the case, I wonder what would we be discussing in the Conference on Disarmament today, and how different and how peaceful the world would be.

The United Kingdom is one of the countries that conducted nuclear tests and became a nuclear-producing State after the United States had done so. It is an illogical argument that the nuclear weapons of the United Kingdom are a precaution or a deterrent and pose no threat to global security, while other States' nuclear deterrence for self-defence purposes constitute a serious nuclear proliferation challenge. Many times we have heard the official statement of the United Kingdom on its full commitment to global nuclear disarmament. Does that mean that the United Kingdom is ready to dismantle all its nuclear weapons and lead global efforts for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in the world? I think the answer will be no. If so, the United Kingdom should not point the finger at other countries which take defensive measures to safeguard their national security against external threats.

The remarks on my country in the statements made by Estonia and this morning Slovenia do not deserve any response. Their remarks simply show their political ignorance of the Korean Peninsula and, I think, bring shame on them. The European countries should bear in mind that continually mentioning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to enhance the text of their speeches will not help resolve the problem. Their attempts to put more pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, will only result in the further aggravation of the situation on the Korean Peninsula. I do not think anybody wants that.

As for Japan, I always think the remarks by the representatives of Japan are cunning and sometimes they are shameless. Japan has no authority to talk about the right to self-defence of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Japan is using the so-called threat from Democratic People's Republic of Korea as an excuse to accelerate its remilitarization. The military build-up of Japan, including the repeated launch of spy satellites and its plan to establish a space defence unit, clearly demonstrates its sinister ambition to secure military dominance in Asia, which poses a grave threat to peace and stability in this region.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The next delegation that has the right of reply is Ukraine.

**Mr. Klymenko** (Ukraine): Thank you, Mr. President. Since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to start by extending my warmest congratulations to you on the assumption of your duties and by wishing you every success in this challenging endeavour.

Before I proceed, I would like also to use this opportunity to commend the Algerian and Argentinian presidencies and their teams for their tireless efforts to find a breakthrough in the Conference on Disarmament, as reflected in the recently distributed updated package of documents, which we find to be a good basis for further discussions.

Since my country was mentioned yesterday by the United States of America in the context of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, I would like to thank the delegation of the United States for that country's unwavering solidarity. For my part, I have to highlight that this aggression is of an ongoing nature. Just recently, on 18 February 2020, the Russian occupation forces marked the sixth anniversary of the armed aggression against Ukraine and the fifth anniversary of the Debaltseve tragedy by launching an artillery attack and infantry assault on Ukrainian positions in the Luhansk region. Russian occupation forces have used weaponry banned under the Minsk agreements.

Russia has once again proved that it is not willing to engage constructively in good faith with the peace process. Hostilities and violence on the ground, being committed by the Russian occupation authorities on everyday basis, jeopardizes this fragile process and dramatically decreases the safety and security of the civilian population, who continue to suffer.

Let me remind you that, as of today, about 44,000 km<sup>2</sup> – or some 7 per cent of the territory of Ukraine – are under foreign occupation in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Over 14,000 people have been killed and more than 27,000 wounded.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, I have repeatedly drawn attention in this chamber to the progressive, threatening militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea by the Russian Federation, leading to the violation of the nuclear-free status of the Crimean Peninsula. In this vein, the strict implementation of General Assembly resolution 74/17 of 13 December 2019 (A/RES/74/17), entitled “Problem of militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov”, is of paramount importance.

I am not at all tired of reiterating the negative impact on the global security architecture that has been caused by the blatant violation by the Russian Federation of the Budapest Memorandum, especially in the context of the upcoming 2020 Review Conference.

Not only has Russia violated the Budapest Memorandum, but, in its aggression against Ukraine, it also persistently breaches the provisions of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Biological Weapons Convention, as we have regularly highlighted in the relevant platforms, providing updated data. The violation by the Russian Federation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty significantly undermined regional and international stability. We cannot turn a blind eye. Our august body does not exist in a vacuum. In our effort to renew the substantive work of the Conference, we have to maintain a constant connection with reality, even if that reality is a vexing one.

**The President:** Thank you, Excellency, for your statement. The next member State that has requested the right of reply is China.

**Mr. Ji Zhaoyu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*):** Thank you Mr. President. In response to the remark made under the right of reply by the representative of the United States this morning, I wish to emphasize and point out that the United States delegation has made excuses for their country’s multiple unilateral departures and withdrawal from treaties, and especially for ridding itself of the shackles of existing arms control instruments and thus freely engaging in the development of strategic arms. Its accusations against China are purely a pretext. China will absolutely never accept this, and the international community will not be deceived by the fabrications put forward by the United States. We urge the United States, as the country with the largest nuclear arsenal, to honestly assume its specific responsibility to lead in nuclear disarmament, to respond favourably to the proposals made by the Russian Federation, to extend the new START and to make progress in substantially reducing its nuclear arsenal. These are the practical steps that the United States must take to create the conditions required for future multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, and they correspond with the long-standing consensus and the aspirations of the international community.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished representative of China. The distinguished representative of Japan also wishes to exercise the right of reply.

**Mr. Nakai (Japan):** Thank you very much, Mr. President. We do not wish to waste the precious time of the Conference on Disarmament discussing matters other than substantial disarmament. But in the wake of the nonsensical and utterly baseless accusation against us by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, we are compelled to exercise our right of reply.

The message to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea contained in our statement during the high-level segment is very simple: we demand that they keep their word on denuclearization by renouncing the nuclear weapons that they developed in defiance of three Security Council resolutions.

The accusation that Japan is engaged in militarization for the purpose of securing military dominance in Asia is utter nonsense and does not merit a response in this Conference. But since the representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea mentioned our space programme, allow me to briefly clarify that the purpose of the recently established space unit in our Air Self-Defence Force is to enhance space situational

awareness. That is in keeping with the goal of our space programme, which is to promote the peaceful and stable uses of outer space.

**The President:** Thank you, distinguished representative of Japan. The next representative that asked for the right of reply is the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation.

**Ms. Kuznetsova** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, several speakers have mentioned Russia this morning. My delegation reserves the right to make use of the right of reply at subsequent meetings.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation. The next delegation that wishes to exercise the right of reply is the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Han** Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. In the past, representatives of Japan have claimed to only mention my country in relation to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. But, as my delegation has asked previously, the question is why the nuclear issue is raised only in respect of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. If there was no constant nuclear threat from other countries, such as the United States of America, we would not need to develop a nuclear deterrent.

You know, my country is one of the smallest in our region, so we don't need such things. We, too, want to invest all our efforts in developing the national economy. But the situation does not allow us to do that. As for Japan, that country was defeated in the Second World War and so it has no right to have a regular army. Why, then, are they increasing their defence budget? Why are they trying to militarize their country? As I said, Japan is using the so-called threat from my country as an excuse to accelerate its remilitarization. Japan brought great suffering to Asian countries during the Second World War, so any attempted remilitarization of that country, as I said, is a great threat to peace and security in the region, and one that inspires fear and concern among all Asian countries..

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The distinguished representative of Japan wishes to exercise his right of reply.

**Mr. Nakai** (Japan): Mr. President, we are going to be very brief. Anything to do with the Second World War is utterly irrelevant to the discussions of the Conference on Disarmament. We are here to discuss substantial disarmament. Furthermore, we would like to remind the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it made a commitment to denuclearization. We are requesting that country to keep its word.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished representative of Japan. The distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran has requested the floor to exercise his right of reply.

**Mr. Azadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. I am taking the floor to exercise our right of reply to the comments made by the representative of the United States this morning. The United States representative repeated absurd allegations against Iran and preached that we should become a "normal" country. But we should consider who is talking about "norms" and "normal". Does a regime without any regard or respect for any international norms and standards have any moral high ground to talk about others' behaviour? Does an impulsive administration with a long record of breaching international and multilateral commitments have any authority to speak about Iran, which has a proven record of abiding by its international obligations? Does the United States regime – which has shamelessly violated Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) – have any legal or moral ground to criticize Iran for taking remedial measures, in accordance with the terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, to correct the imbalance caused by the United States' unilateral and unlawful act?

The United States regime must be held accountable for its impulsive, irresponsible and unlawful acts and provocations, which have been the main cause of instability and violence in Western Asia. The United States must learn that they cannot dictate norms while continuing to act abnormally and immorally. The United States must recognize that

the whole world is fed up with its arrogance, hypocrisy and sense of entitlement. It is outrageous that the United States is so brazen as to assume that it can fool the whole world into believing its nonsensical and absurd claims against other nations. They are best advised to return to normal behaviour and a civilized way of engagement, rather than insisting obsessively on their dangerous, irresponsible unilateralism.

Mr. President, under such circumstances, talk of a new negotiation is a travesty: a hypocritical gesture without credit or credibility.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The distinguished representative of the United States of America has requested the right of reply.

**Ms. Plath** (United States of America): Mr. President, thank you for giving me the floor. I want to make a very specific remark. The United States stands with our Japanese colleagues and I urge our colleague from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to heed my earlier warning. They would be best served by sticking to the facts and recognizing the security situation as it is today, not how they remember it to be 60 years ago. That is not helpful for anyone here in this room.

As for Iran, my delegation would not stoop so low as to dignify this ridiculous intervention. The remarks of the Iranian representative are only further evidence of how isolated Iran has become on all of these issues.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished representative of the United States of America. The distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has decided to exercise his right of reply.

**Mr. Han** Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. The relationship between my country and Japan is not a normal relationship. It is a relationship between a victim and an assailant. Japan colonized my country for more than 36 years. They imposed great sufferings, not only on the people of my country but also in other countries in Asia. Now they are trying to remilitarize, which is of deep concern for my country and other countries in our region. If they want to remilitarize, they should find another excuse that does not involve the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. If Japan really wished to normalize relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it should apologize and provide compensation for what it did to my country.

As for the remarks by the United States of America, I mentioned the events of 75 years ago because Japan is using us as an excuse to remilitarize. In a previous meeting, the United States representative asked me for clarification of the term "hostile policy", to my great surprise. English is the official language of America. It is not my mother tongue, it is my second language. I believe she knows I was referring to the United States' hostile policy, so I do not know why she asked that. Perhaps she was mocking me. If the United States wishes to side with Japan, it should know the kind of things that happened on the Korean Peninsula and see that Japan wishes to use us as their excuse to remilitarize.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case, so our business for this morning is concluded. The next meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will take place on Thursday, 27 February 2020, at 10 a.m. The meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.*