

Conference on Disarmament

English

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


Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 3 March 2020, at 11.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Carlos Mario Foradori (Argentina)

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The President: I call to order the 1537th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Today, I would like to begin by giving the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Germany, followed by the distinguished Ambassador of Sweden, who have asked to brief us on the Berlin Ministerial Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was held on 25 February 2020. Afterwards, I intend to hold a discussion on the latest version of the package including the draft programme of work that was circulated yesterday by the secretariat. I therefore now give the floor to Ambassador Beerwerth.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving my distinguished Swedish colleague and myself the opportunity to brief the Conference on Disarmament. On 25 February 2020, foreign ministers of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) met in Berlin. It was the second ministerial meeting of the Stockholm Initiative, which launched in 2019. At the Berlin meeting, ministers adopted a political declaration entitled “The NPT at 50 – Advancing Nuclear Disarmament, Securing Our Future” and an annex containing a set of 22 concrete measures, entitled “Stepping Stones for Advancing Nuclear Disarmament”.

The purpose of the Stockholm Initiative is to overcome the standstill in nuclear disarmament and to lend new impetus to the fulfilment of the commitments enshrined in article VI of the NPT. The participating Governments, although from different regions and having different political affiliations, share the view that the 2020 NPT Review Conference must demonstrate that article VI of the NPT still matters in practical terms – as do all other commitments under the Treaty.

Since its first ministerial meeting, the Initiative has received much attention. The declaration issued at the Stockholm Ministerial Meeting in 2019 was well received in the NPT community. Participating countries have joined forces with Secretary-General Guterres on the margins of the General Assembly and have worked to further substantiate the Initiative. This work is reflected in the declaration and the Stepping Stones adopted in Berlin. These are practical and meaningful measures to advance nuclear disarmament in concrete terms. The Initiative does not pursue unattainable goals, but aims to take steps that can realistically be taken today, based on commitments previously made in the NPT framework. Naturally, the nuclear-weapon States bear prime responsibility for achieving further progress, including through measures that go beyond reduction efforts.

The two documents speak for themselves. The Stepping Stones are mainly addressed to nuclear-weapon States. At the same time, the countries participating in the Stockholm Initiative acknowledge the necessity that they themselves contribute to strengthening the NPT. That includes a high-level engagement at the Review Conference and continued engagement in various fields (countering proliferation crises; work on verification; nuclear education; and transparency). Combined efforts by nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States can thus facilitate more far-reaching measures to reduce nuclear arsenals.

The Stepping Stones range from the extension of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty to further stockpile reductions, declaratory restraint at the highest political level, the tightening of negative security assurances, concrete measures for nuclear risk reduction, transparency and reporting measures, engagement on nuclear disarmament verification, nuclear disarmament education, steps to facilitate negotiations on a treaty prohibiting fissile material production and the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and measures to enhance the NPT review process.

With the Berlin Ministerial Meeting, the Stockholm Initiative has embarked on its next, decisive phase, leading to the 2020 NPT Review Conference. Members are resolved to contribute actively to a successful conference. Furthermore, ministers have agreed to turn the Stepping Stones into an NPT working paper. We invite all NPT countries to join us in our endeavour and to lend support to both the political declaration and the Stepping Stones. Copies of the two documents will be available in this room in a moment. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement. I now give the floor to Ambassador Bard of Sweden.

Ms. Bard (Sweden): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving us the opportunity to present the results of the Berlin Ministerial Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament and the

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to the member States of the Conference on Disarmament. In addition to the presentation that my German colleague has delivered on the political declaration that was adopted in Berlin, I would like to add a few words on the further steps that will be taken by the countries participating in the Stockholm Initiative in the run-up to the 2020 NPT Review Conference, which is now less than two months away.

The Berlin declaration reaffirms the political and diplomatic engagement of the participating States and their focus on promoting an ambitious yet realistic agenda which can be supported by nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States alike – a common ground agenda. In preparing specific proposals for the Review Conference, the Stockholm Initiative has focused on pragmatic measures, known as the “Stepping Stones for Advancing Nuclear Disarmament”, which take into account various State perspectives and the current security environment. The purpose of the Stepping Stones approach is to reduce current nuclear risks and to build the trust necessary for larger subsequent disarmament steps. The Stepping Stones are a non-exhaustive list and include measures to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in doctrines and policies; to enhance transparency in doctrines and policies of nuclear-weapon States; to reduce the risk of intentional or unintentional use of nuclear weapons; to strengthen cooperation and build trust; and to strengthen the nuclear arms control architecture.

The countries participating in the Stockholm Initiative are now seeking dialogue with other States parties to the NPT to build support for the proposed agenda. For that purpose, in the coming weeks, we will contact the capitals of States parties to the NPT to draw attention to the Berlin declaration and its annex containing the Stepping Stones. We invite the nuclear-weapon States to have an exchange on the Stepping Stones, and to take up our suggestions. Moreover, the annex to the Berlin declaration containing the Stepping Stones will be submitted as a joint working paper to the Review Conference. The countries of the Stockholm Initiative will invite States parties to align themselves with the overall agenda set forth in that paper with a view to the implementation of commitments. We strongly believe that if States parties can unite behind an implementation agenda – through the Stepping Stones – at the Review Conference, it would demonstrate the resilience and credibility of the treaty framework for the benefit of all States parties. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Thank you for your statement, Ambassador.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I now turn to the revised package. I would like to begin by thanking all members and observers of the Conference on Disarmament for their constructive engagement and flexibility. I appreciate the discussion that we held during the plenary session on 27 February 2020. After that meeting, I and the other Presidents of this session reached the conclusion that the revised package was taking us further from consensus and for that reason we decided to resume work on the basis of the first package submitted by the six Presidents. We gave careful consideration to every single comment and observation made by the delegations. For us, all observations from member States have the same value, and therefore we held several informal meetings in different formats to try to accommodate all concerns.

After many consultations, the six Presidents decided that by introducing a few changes, especially in the title, we would move closer to the consensus required to begin the substantive work of the Conference. This proposal is the result of lengthy, extensive and profound consultations and is possibly the only solution that we foresee at this critical juncture. We could not find another alternative. Believe me, we tried hard and in good faith to do so, and did not neglect exclusivity and transparency in the process.

We all have an important responsibility: to submit a programme of work at the beginning of the year. Now it is already 3 March, so let us try to move forward, inspired by the principles that we all share. At this stage, I would like to share with you an interesting experience that I had recently. From many of my conversations with distinguished colleagues, I perceived that some of them are concealing their intentions. In doing so, they are trying to fool us. The most common currency used in the Conference is mistrust of one another. This lack of trust sometimes leads me to think that, unfortunately – and I hope this is only a misconception – that some are more keen to support a “programme of war” than a programme of work. I believe that unless we take seriously our responsibility to fight for disarmament, we will not only fail to fulfil the Conference’s mandate, but more importantly our moral mandate vis-à-vis the international community.

We must understand that civility is not a sign of weakness and that sincerity does not always have to be proved. It seems that we are exiled from reality, trapped in a labyrinth that we ourselves built with special dedication during these last 20 years. Therefore, I suggest and call upon you to explore together the hitherto unknown territory of a common ground of agreement, to start working in a manner that is united and coordinated. Some say that we have a mandate to negotiate and at the same time express with passion their firm determination to approve a programme of work. And I wonder, is negotiation not another form of work?

If we do not agree to start work, we will never agree to begin negotiations on any matter. In short, if we do not trust each other, at least a little, we will not start work. If we do not start work, we will not commence disarmament. And so this vicious circle will never end.

At this point, I invite you to make comments on this third proposal of the six Presidents. I have on my list the distinguished representative of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Thank you Mr. President. I endorse everything that you have said. The six presidencies of the 2020 session, one of which will be Australia, have worked closely together as a team. The rules of procedure say that we should adopt a programme of work at the start of the year and our view is that two presidencies out of six is enough time to spend on the package for this year. We have done our best. It is not a perfect package and nobody is completely happy, but it does give us a structure for substantive work. We sincerely hope that we can agree to adopt it this week.

If the Conference on Disarmament decides not to adopt the package this week, we will set it aside for the six presidencies of 2021 and we will submit the documents as official documents. We are more than happy to continue consultations with any members of the Conference that have ideas on how to reach consensus, but we will not continue the discussion on this package in the plenary.

We also hear from members that they would like to focus on substance and that it is time to dedicate plenary meetings to substantive discussions on the items on the Conference's agenda and on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. But I sincerely hope that we will agree to adopt the package this week.

The President: I thank the distinguished delegate of Australia. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? The Ambassador of the United Kingdom has the floor.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you very much, Mr. President, not only for your wise words this morning but your continued efforts and leadership on this tricky issue. You have consulted widely, you have listened to the views that have been expressed in this plenary and in the consultations that you've held with the membership. I think that the revised package that you have put forward is a wise way of leading us out of the labyrinth that you so aptly described.

My delegation was ready to support the proposal put forward during the presidency of Algeria under the leadership of Ambassador Belbaki. The only change that we can see that has been made to that proposal is the title of the working paper. I think that is unfortunate. It is unfortunate that we seem to be unable to call this document what it really is, which is a programme of work. Nevertheless, if that is what is needed to get the Conference on Disarmament to adopt the package and to commence substantive discussions on our agenda this year, then so be it; we can accept that. My delegation is therefore fully ready to join consensus on this package.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom. I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you also for the revised programme of work and for the tireless efforts of the six Presidents of the 2020 session plus the last President of 2019 and the first President of 2021. I think you have done everything in your power to allow us to have this debate.

I am surprised at some of the changes to the text, because we were under the impression that we were talking about a programme of work. As you said, Mr. President, in your introduction, it is the mandate of the incoming President to present a programme of work. I am not pleased to see that the title has been changed because, as my British

colleague said, this is a programme of work. I see that its title is now “revised working paper on a draft proposal on the work of the Conference on Disarmament for 2020”. If the term “programme of work” is a problem, I would propose that the document might instead be referred to as a “draft proposal on the work of the programme of the Conference on Disarmament for 2020”. It should also be noted that the text itself refers to paragraph 28 of the rules of procedure, which calls on the Conference to establish a programme of work on the basis of its agenda. That is what we are doing, so I would like to see it made clear that this is a programme of work.

Furthermore, I am slightly confused by the content of paragraph 6 of the draft programme of work, which says that “The reports on the progress achieved and agreed on by consensus in subsidiary bodies would be submitted by coordinators to the Conference on Disarmament, through the President, for adoption and due reflection in the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly of the United Nations”. I do not know exactly what that means. Is it in line with the rules of procedure? Would the subsidiary bodies have the authority to make decisions or would that be up to the plenary Conference? And if the subsidiary bodies could not adopt a consensus report, would that mean that we have no report, or that the coordinators should submit a report themselves? So, I have a problem with this. As a fix, we could amend the first line, so that the paragraph would begin: “The reports on the progress achieved and agreed on in subsidiary bodies would be submitted by consensus by the coordinators to the Conference on Disarmament”. The idea is that the report itself will be formally agreed upon in a plenary meeting of the Conference. Of course, every coordinator will establish whether he or she has consensus to submit a report to the plenary, because otherwise he or she runs the risk that the plenary will not adopt it.

The other document is more or less the same and was agreeable to us when we considered it previously. I have no further remarks on this point.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands. I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. I can be brief. First and foremost, let me thank you and the other delegations of the six countries that will hold the presidency this year for your tireless efforts to allow the Conference on Disarmament to resume work. You have prepared, circulated, amended and tabled a set of documents that in our view are ready for adoption. Collectively and individually you have done a tremendous job. Mr. President, I agree entirely with you and our Australian colleague that it is now time to take a decision; we are ready to adopt the papers you have put in front of us. They have our full support. They are probably not perfect for anybody in this room, but for my delegation it is paramount that the Conference gets back into working mode. I am hopeful, looking at colleagues around the room, that we will be able to decide to adopt the package, regardless of what we call it, so that the Conference can resume work.

The President: Thank you, distinguished Ambassador of Germany. I thank you for your words relating to the presidency. I am going to give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I would like to add the voice of Japan to those of previous speakers who welcomed your tireless efforts to strike a good balance through extensive consultation work. Japan, too, prefers the previous version with “programme of work” in the title, since we understood that the previous package would have fully enabled us to engage in substantive work. But for the sake of consensus, Japan gives its full support to the six Presidents who put forward the package.

At some point in time, we would like to have some clarification concerning the reporting system that our Dutch colleague mentioned. It is a legitimate question, and since I myself have been nominated as one of the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies, I would like to know how I should proceed, if and when I am entitled to so. Such clarification might be provided in due course, after the adoption of this package of documents.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Japan. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Peru.

Mr. Aréstegui Bravo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. We take the floor briefly to thank you for your efforts and those of your team in the course of these

weeks. In your work, you have shown dedication and an ability to listen – qualities that we believe are important in a presidency seeking a consensus that few have achieved over the past two decades.

Initially, the aim of your presidency and of all the six Presidents of this session was to present a programme of work that uses the language agreed upon in a decision made two years ago. The consultations conducted and the last plenary meeting led to the conclusion that the agreed language reflected a balance struck at that time, which is difficult to replicate under the current circumstances. Yesterday, we received a revised version of the three documents. In our view, there are two points worth highlighting. The first is that the most important document is no longer referred to as a programme of work. This is a significant change because it means that, this year once again, we will not adopt or implement a programme of work that would allow for the resumption of the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament. However, the second, more positive, point is that language is again being used that would strike a balance that was developing in the 2020 session and that came close to adoption on 14 February this year.

We therefore have before us a new commitment for your presidency and the other presidencies of this session: a package deliberated in the plenary session and discussed informally. These documents maintain the delicate balance achieved at the end of the presidency of Algeria. To put it into perspective, we are within days of the end of the presidency of Argentina, and the feeling among the membership is that, every year, it is the second presidency that offers the opportunity to advance the work of the Conference.

We have sent the package that you presented to us yesterday to our capital, together with our favourable opinion. We are confident that, if adopted, it will allow the delegations to resume substantive discussions and to create a climate of confidence and willingness to adopt a comprehensive and balanced programme of work in the near future. We once again express our gratitude to you and to the other Presidents of this session.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished representative of Peru for the kind words addressed to the presidency and to the other presidencies of this year's session.

(*spoke in English*)

I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of South Africa.

Mr. September (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to speak. I also want to thank you for consulting with delegations, including our delegation, on the package. I also want to thank the six Presidents of this session for their tireless effort in trying to put forward a package that can be adopted.

At the outset, I would like to state that it was very difficult for my delegation to keep our capital informed of the evolution of the process, as there was some confusion about what proposal was actually on the table. Be that as it may, we have transmitted the draft that was circulated yesterday to our capital for instructions. We will ensure that today's discussion is communicated expeditiously to our capital so as to inform their assessment of the draft. We are still awaiting instructions from our capital.

We notice that some of the views that were expressed during the Algerian presidency, and which provided an excellent basis to build upon, have not been incorporated into the draft that was circulated yesterday. We hope that the views of all delegations will be incorporated, as we have mentioned previously. The process should be one of consensus-building, and in order to do that the views of all members should be taken into consideration.

Finally, Mr. President, we want to thank you once again for all of your efforts. Be assured that South Africa stands ready to support you in your attempt to find a consensus. I thank you.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of South Africa. Thank you for your words regarding this presidency and the other presidencies of this session. I do not see any other delegates wishing to take the floor. I am sorry, distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, you have the floor.

Mr. Baghaei Hamaneh (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. I, too, would like to thank the six Presidents of this session and to assure you of our support. As we have already noted, and as was reiterated by my Deputy Foreign Minister last week, Iran attaches tremendous importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the only body which enjoys the capacity and the legal mandate to advance the cause of nuclear disarmament by negotiating legally binding instruments to that end.

That is not something that we can take lightly. It is our collective and individual responsibility to move towards nuclear disarmament, and this responsibility includes the duty to safeguard the Conference's mandate against any unhealthy intrusion or erosion. As you all know, the first and necessary step towards discharging the Conference's core mandate is to craft a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. Comprehensive and balanced means that the programme of work must be consistent and in line with the mandate and the Conference's rules of procedure. Rule 28 of the Conference's rules of procedure, for instance, is clear about what the Conference has to adopt. It is programme of work. Not a package.

However, the Conference showed broad consensus under the presidency of Algeria and I again take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Belbaki for his professional, transparent and honest approach in steering the work of the Conference. Under his able leadership, the delegations were somehow able to accept the concept of a package; including those delegations that had serious reservations about part of that package. We have made it clear, however, that this should not mean that we should sacrifice some of the inherent mandate of the Conference, simply to have something for discussion.

You referred, Mr. President, to a vicious circle, which you believe emanates from a lack of trust. I agree that we should avoid contributing to this perceived lack of trust. The way to do that is to live up to our responsibilities: we as the member States, and you as the President.

Having said that, Mr. President, and while we take a professional approach to considering all proposals, we wonder how the new version is different from the one proposed by Algeria three weeks ago. While the title might have been important for some delegations, my delegation did not make an issue out of it. Of course, I respect everyone's views, concerns and observations. You refer to the fact that you have tried to take into account every single observation and we appreciate that you conducted consultations immediately after the presidency of Algeria concluded. I think it was on the second day of your presidency that we held an informal consultation in the presence of several delegations, in which we clearly set out our concerns and proposals. During the past two weeks, we have conveyed those concerns to you, and you preferred, until a few days ago, to focus on language adopted in 2018. The President has the prerogative to do that, and we respect it, just as we respect the decision to return to the package proposed by Algeria.

Nevertheless, Mr. President, we would appreciate it if you would seriously take all observations into account. You said that you intend to do that in crafting a new version. But the text which is currently before us unfortunately does not address the minimal concerns that we raised with you. Again, if you remember, my delegation began to provide some options and the delegations discussed different wordings. We thought that at least some of those concerns would have been duly reflected in your version. So, thank you again, Mr. President. We will continue to engage with you and with other delegations in order to see how best we can respond to those observations that we made during our informal consultations with you and with other delegations.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. I will now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. Allow me at the outset to thank you for distributing the revised version of the draft decision and for your efforts during the extensive consultations on it. I also thank all the six Presidents of this session for their efforts, which have enabled us to reach this important stage of our work.

Mr. President, the concerns raised by my delegation during the consultations and the previous plenary meeting remain valid. We expect that, in the context of seeking to build a consensus, every effort will be made to take all concerns into account before submitting a

revised version of the draft decision. We stress that the process of building a consensus is demanding and requires great effort. My delegation has expressed its willingness to participate constructively in the project on the Conference's substantive work, despite our concerns about the danger of the subsidiary bodies becoming forums for perpetuating a deliberative process that simply repeats national positions and goes around in circles without achieving any added value that would lead towards the implementation of the Conference's negotiating mandate, and may cause it to gradually move away from the primary mandate of the Conference, namely the negotiation of legal instruments.

As for the presidential statement on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, we have already made clear on several occasions, including in informal consultations, our position on that point. We have emphasized that the Conference's resources and time should be concentrated on implementing its primary mandate, especially in light of the increased risks and challenges faced in the current global security environment. We have already indicated that while we acknowledge that there is room to improve the methods used, this is not an urgent matter for discussion by the Commission. We believe that it is unnecessary to artificially link the substantive work of the Conference to this procedural aspect. We are therefore of the view that it is appropriate to give more time to carefully studying this draft and clarifying the aspects that need to be discussed and improved to ensure its accuracy and determine its ultimate goal so that the desired added value is obtained.

Given the procedural nature of this issue, and in order not to hinder the substantive decision, we still believe it is necessary to separate the presidential statement on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference from the decision on subsidiary bodies.

Mr. President, my delegation is aware of the great efforts you have made in cooperation with the other presidencies of this session to explore ways to allow the Conference to return to its substantive work, but at the same time we believe that the proposed revised draft still needs more work and refinement.

In conclusion, we thank you for your efforts and express our readiness to continue to interact constructively and in a positive spirit with your endeavours to reach consensus in order to resume the substantive work of the Conference.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Good morning, distinguished colleagues. I initially did not want to speak, given the importance for us of hearing the opinions of other delegations today, but having heard a few comments I finally decided to take the floor.

First of all, I would like to thank the Ambassador of Argentina and his team for the efforts made over the past week to reconcile positions and submit a revised version of the Algerian package on organization of the work of the Conference on Disarmament in 2020.

I would like to make a number of comments and first of all to explain why the Russian Federation considered it important to focus on the title of the document. We welcome that change. For us it was important that the title of the document should correspond to its content. Of course, compared to 2018, the documents submitted are a definite step forward, but we cannot consider these documents to be a programme of work, since there is no consensus among the delegations about the start of negotiation work. If we do not begin negotiations, we consider that documents providing for a timetable of meetings or the establishment of subsidiary bodies, working groups and special committees cannot constitute a programme of work. Our position is absolutely clear, we have not changed it and I hope that other delegations will support us in this.

As for the matter raised by my distinguished colleague, Ambassador Gabriëlse of the Netherlands, regarding operative paragraph 6 of the first document, specifically the need to delete the words "by consensus" from the text, I must draw your attention to paragraph 4, where it is stated that the subsidiary bodies work in accordance with paragraphs 24 and 18 of the Conference's rules of procedure; those rules clearly stipulate that the decisions of the Conference, and so of the subsidiary bodies, are adopted by consensus. Therefore, the

words “by consensus” in paragraph 6 are fully compatible with paragraph 4 of the document. That is my first point.

Secondly, there was a question from the delegation of Japan about what to do if a certain misunderstanding arises about the character or status of a report by a subsidiary body. In this respect, I would like to draw your attention to rules 24 and 25 of the rules of procedure. Rule 25 states, and I will cite it in English:

(spoke in English)

“The approval by consensus of reports shall not be interpreted as affecting in any manner the essential requirement that such reports must reflect faithfully the positions of all the members of the respective organs.”

(spoke in Russian)

It is quite clear that, regardless of the status of such a report, it must accurately reflect the positions expressed by the States during the work of the body. I think that that is the main thing to be considered by the representatives of States who have agreed to be coordinators of these bodies.

I will end my intervention by stating that many aspects of the package presented raise quite a lot of doubts and concerns for the Russian delegation. Nonetheless, considering all the circumstances, both internal, meaning the situation at the Conference, and external, meaning the situation that is now developing with respect to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, and also understanding the need to launch substantive work at the Conference, which could greatly facilitate and make a positive contribution to the outcome of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we are prepared to consider the possibility of supporting the consensus on the draft, if one is reached.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Andarcia Rodríguez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation would like to recognize the efforts that you have made in exploring possible paths towards consensual solutions in recent days. We also appreciate the assessment of the Presidents that the proposals previously put forward by Algeria were close to being approved by the Conference. My country supported the efforts made by the presidency of Algeria to provide a consensus solution that would gradually bring the Conference to overcome its deadlock.

Venezuela has listened very closely to the comments and legitimate concerns of the delegations that have expressed unease regarding the current security situation. As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference has had to play a role in that respect. It is therefore imperative to begin negotiating legally binding instruments based on the items on the Conference agenda, as the Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela affirmed when he addressed the high-level segment of the Conference last week.

In the course of 2019 and 2020, the delegations of States members of the Conference have repeatedly emphasized the need for the Conference to preserve its negotiating mandate. My country shares both this view and that of the delegations that have asked member States not to allow discussions that clearly fall within the mandate of the Disarmament Commission in New York to become routine in the Conference on Disarmament.

We are not entirely convinced that the changes, circulated yesterday, to the title of the proposal by Algeria have really taken into account the requests from delegations relating to the proposals presented by the six Presidents of the 2020 session, particularly as regards the Conference’s negotiating mandate and the need to refrain from making restarting discussions conditional upon procedural matters.

We also believe that the presidency’s statement on the effective functioning of the Conference warrants caution. It is possible that pursuing attempts to achieve a consensus

based on these proposals would only exacerbate the polarized atmosphere currently affecting the Conference.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is therefore prepared to continue exploring ways of identifying potential consensus solutions in 2020 and of preserving the negotiating mandate, the Conference agenda and the nature of the programme of work.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the distinguished representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for her statement.

(*spoke in English*)

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I see none. I would like to thank all the delegations that have shared their views and expressed their opinions on the revised package. That concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting will be announced as soon as possible. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.