

# Conference on Disarmament

English

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## Final record of the one thousand five hundred and seventieth plenary meeting

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*President:* Mr. Yuri Borissov Sterk ..... (Bulgaria)

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**The President:** I call to order the 1570th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues, as announced last week, my intention this morning is to continue with the list of speakers remaining from the thematic discussion on agenda item 1. Once that list is exhausted, we will move on to today's thematic discussion on agenda item 2 of the Conference. The first remaining speaker on my list for the thematic discussion on agenda item 1 is the distinguished delegate of China, Mr. Chen Zhengyang.

**Mr. Chen Zhengyang (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, as one of the core issues of the Conference on Disarmament, agenda item 1, cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, covers concrete issues from numerous angles. Last week, two invited guests made presentations dealing primarily with the issue of nuclear disarmament verification. I would also like to discuss how China views this issue.

Effective verification is an important guarantor of the ultimate achievement of the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons and the establishment of a world free of nuclear weapons. The verification provisions in the existing international treaties on the topic play an important role in ensuring that the parties fulfil their obligations with regard to nuclear disarmament and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In the future, the parties to international legal instruments related to nuclear disarmament should also develop corresponding verification mechanisms on the basis of their concrete content.

China believes that, in the process of discussing the issue of nuclear disarmament verification, several basic principles should be followed. The first is the principle of balance: nuclear disarmament verification must strike a balance between credibility and the protection of sensitive information. The second is the principle of non-proliferation: nuclear disarmament verification arrangements should take full account of the risk that sensitive information may leak, and should include strict precautionary measures to prevent any such leaks from leading to nuclear proliferation. The third is the principle of measured progress: the relevant discussions should be carried out step by step, dealing with easier issues before difficult ones and avoiding quick fixes.

It should be noted in particular that specific verification measures should and can only be paired with the corresponding nuclear disarmament treaty. They must be negotiated by the parties that negotiated the treaty concerned, based on the nature and content of that treaty and their actual national circumstances. Attempting to establish a universally applicable uniform verification template is neither scientific nor realistic. The idea of developing a verification mechanism first and then negotiating a nuclear disarmament treaty puts the cart before the horse and is unworkable.

Mr. President, the United States and Russia, as the two nuclear super-Powers with the largest nuclear arsenals, should continue to substantially and materially reduce their nuclear arsenals in a verifiable and irreversible manner. Their long exploration of and practice in verification technology and know-how provide important lessons for international discussions on nuclear disarmament verification.

However, bilateral United States-Russian verification measures cannot be arbitrarily transposed to other areas. Specific verification measures must be concluded and implemented through consensus among all negotiating parties. Discrimination based on technical capabilities and objective differences must be avoided, and the fair, reasonable, realistic and feasible conduct of verification must be ensured.

When discussing nuclear disarmament verification, the new challenges and opportunities presented by the rapid development of new technologies should also be given due consideration, along with the balanced advancement of capacity-building in nuclear disarmament verification.

The international community has undertaken relevant discussions around the issue of nuclear disarmament verification, and a number of mechanisms have also taken shape. This helps to enhance mutual understanding and trust among nuclear-weapon States and with

non-nuclear-weapon States, and also reflects the concern of the international community regarding nuclear disarmament verification.

China believes that the United Nations should play a leading role in the international discussion of nuclear disarmament verification. This is an important factor in ensuring the authority, representativeness and influence of the international discussions concerned.

This year, a new session of the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification will soon begin its official work in Geneva. The experts nominated by China will continue to contribute actively to its discussions. The substantive discussions on nuclear disarmament in the Conference should be coordinated with the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and other mechanisms, so that the relevant work within the United Nations framework can be carried out in a smooth and orderly manner.

Nuclear disarmament verification is a long-term and complex issue, and the discussion process is bound to encounter numerous difficulties, known or unknown. China will continue to carry out technical studies on nuclear disarmament verification while actively participating in the relevant international cooperation, and stands ready to work with colleagues from other countries to play a constructive role in promoting the international discussion of nuclear disarmament verification.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished delegate of China and I now give the floor to the next speaker, the distinguished delegate of Indonesia, Mr. Indra Rosandry.

**Mr. Rosandry** (Indonesia): I appreciate this opportunity to deliver my delegation's statement on agenda item 1, the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, today. Indonesia associates itself with the general statement of the Group of 21 delivered by Iraq at the last meeting and, in our national capacity, we would also like to share some additional views on this issue.

Mr. President, we believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee of avoiding global catastrophes. Indonesia continues to consider nuclear disarmament as the highest priority and reiterates that each article of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is binding on all States parties at all times and in all circumstances. Indonesia therefore reiterates its calls to all nuclear-weapon States to properly implement their long overdue obligations under the Treaty and the commitments agreed by consensus at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty without further delay, and to refrain from any action that would undermine the objective of the Treaty: the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the prevention of the nuclear arms race.

Pending the achievement of the complete elimination of such weapons, Indonesia reaffirms the urgent need for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to effectively assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use of or threat of use of nuclear weapons as a matter of high priority. In this regard, we call for tangible progress and stand ready to work on this matter.

Indonesia would also like to emphasize that the fundamental principles of transparency, verification and irreversibility should be applied to all nuclear disarmament measures. We believe that the current exclusive nuclear disarmament verification mechanism has major limitations: among others, the lack of global credibility and the fact that it is prone to political uncertainty within the exclusive parties involved. For Indonesia, it is important that the credibility should be widely recognized and help to build symmetrical confidence among all stakeholders. We believe that this kind of credibility can only be attained through a feasible, efficient and inclusive nuclear disarmament verification regime.

In this regard, we believe that capacity-building programmes are necessary, especially to bridge the gap between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear weapon States in terms of expertise on the whole cycle of nuclear disarmament verification capability, which could subsequently preserve the non-discriminatory nature of verification methodology under a future, multilaterally agreed, nuclear disarmament regime.

For Indonesia, the new nuclear disarmament verification initiative must ensure compliance with existing obligations under relevant treaties and must be mindful of the need for efficiency in financial and human resources. In this context, it could consider the

involvement of existing institutions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency to prevent the risk of potential proliferation from proposed capacity-building programmes. The Agency has a credible operational track record covering more than six decades in dealing with the risk of nuclear proliferation through a globally accepted safety, security and safeguard regime.

Mr. President, progress in the nuclear disarmament agenda is dependent on many factors and must be propelled by means of strong political will and concrete steps on the part of all States. Let us all, therefore, reaffirm our commitment and political will to support the endeavour to make nuclear weapons a thing of the past.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished delegate of Indonesia and I give the floor to the next speaker, the distinguished delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ms. Arline Mendoza.

**Ms. Díaz Mendoza** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, we would like to thank the distinguished panellists who spoke on 11 May for their presentations and their contribution to the discussion on item 1 of the agenda, cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament. We fully endorse the statement made by the distinguished delegation of Iraq on behalf of the Group of 21, and we will now, in our national capacity, address various matters related to nuclear disarmament.

My delegation attaches great importance to the work of the Conference, as we consider it to be an integral and vital part of the disarmament machinery, which must be preserved and strengthened. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms its commitment to the objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, which are fundamental to strengthening international peace and security, as well as its support for multilateralism as a basic principle of the negotiations that must be held in this area, leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international controls.

We would like to highlight the political commitment that the international community took on with respect to the prohibition of nuclear weapons when the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force. My country was the seventh to ratify the Treaty because it was the first legal instrument to provide for an express and comprehensive ban on such weapons and to address the humanitarian impact of their testing and use. The Treaty is a forceful expression of the will of most United Nations Member States, which demand that significant progress be made towards nuclear disarmament, and is unquestionably an effective contribution to international peace and security. Accordingly, we salute the States that have signed and ratified this historic treaty and urge those that have not done so to quickly consider becoming parties to this important international instrument, which represents an invaluable contribution to disarmament and reinforces other basic agreements in the field, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties.

Mr. President, my delegation wishes to express its deep concern about the threat that the continued existence of nuclear weapons poses to humanity. The reach and degree of destruction of a nuclear weapon are immeasurable. The world is facing new threats and challenges that have contributed to increased risks of proliferation, including the stalemate in multilateral disarmament diplomacy, the accelerated pace at which nuclear weapons are being refined and modernized because of the advances in science and technology, and even the misguided application of unilateral coercive measures by countries with nuclear arsenals, which represents a new danger in an international order based on the equality of States.

It is imperative that nuclear-weapon States, non-nuclear-weapon States and States that have not acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons commit to fulfilling the basic precepts of nuclear arms control and nuclear disarmament so that the undue proliferation of such weapons can be prevented. It is no longer in merely hypothetical terms that we speak of the potentially catastrophic consequences for humanity of the use of nuclear weapons, which constitutes the gravest threat facing humanity because it would make the survival of civilization utterly impossible.

We wish to express our deep concern at nuclear-weapon States' continued lack of progress in performing their nuclear disarmament obligations, which has polarized the

discussion, increased divisions among States parties and could undermine the object and purpose of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the credibility of the non-proliferation regime. It is for this reason that nuclear-weapon States bear the greatest responsibility for implementing measures to reduce and eliminate their nuclear arsenals in line with the spirit of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and thereby ensure a safer world, free from nuclear threat.

Mr. President, we wish to underscore that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and essential for strengthening international peace and security. Venezuela recognizes the importance of the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and we therefore reiterate the importance of implementing its three pillars without distinction and for the benefit of all humankind. That is why tangible progress must be made at the next Review Conference in all three pillars of the Treaty. Venezuela reiterates that a climate of international peace and security can only be assured if sincere efforts are made to achieve nuclear disarmament. We encourage the international community to make every effort to contribute to world peace and stability.

We call on the nuclear Powers to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons so that rapid progress can be made in the elimination of such weapons in a multilateral, simultaneous and non-discriminatory manner. In my country's view, the nuclear risk lies in the very existence of nuclear weapons. We stress that general, complete and non-discriminatory disarmament, based on strict international control, as a guarantee of international peace and security, as called for by the Group of 21, is the best protection against the risk that a nuclear weapon will be detonated, but this has been a tremendously difficult challenge.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. I will now take one request for the right of reply from last Thursday's plenary. I give the floor to Ambassador Robert Wood of the United States of America.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Mr. President, I am taking the floor to exercise my right of reply to respond to comments made last week by the representative of Iran, who accused the United States of being in material breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Let me be very clear: the United States is in compliance with all of its obligations under the Treaty. Instead of falsely accusing the United States of not complying with its obligations, Iran should focus on complying with its own nuclear non-proliferation obligations.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the United States for his statement. I understand we have no more speakers on agenda item 1 and points of order. It is time for us now to turn to the topic of our thematic discussion today, that is agenda item 2. And, I would like to briefly introduce the subject, which will be presented in greater detail by our panellists today.

In recent years, the issue of nuclear risk reduction has been back on the radar in the international security debate among policymakers, non-governmental organizations and the expert community, against the backdrop of renewed strategic competition and the polarization of discussions in multilateral forums.

In their statement on non-proliferation and disarmament of 6 April 2019, the members of the Group of Seven stated that efforts towards strategic risk reduction constitute important contributions to regional and international security. Emphasis was put on transparency and dialogue on nuclear doctrines and postures as part of the important elements of strategic risk reduction that can help avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation.

Further in their statement, the members committed themselves to continuing to seek ways to improve and spread the understanding of strategic risk reduction measures, including in the run-up to the 2020 Review Conference of States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Conference is still ahead of us.

As regards the Conference on Disarmament, only last year, a document prepared by the Australian presidency outlined a number of issues, which the Conference might wish to consider. The paper stated that there was an interest in substantive discussions on nuclear risk reduction, including through an examination of the work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).

In many of its studies and reports, UNIDIR defines types of risk and possible mitigation measures on different levels. To consider and reflect on what might constitute major risks for the deliberate and/or accidental use of nuclear weapons and how the Conference on Disarmament could contribute towards a better understanding and mitigation of those risks, we will hear today from Mr. Wilfred Wan and Ms. Janifer Mackby.

Mr. Wan is the lead researcher on the UNIDIR programme on weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons. He has publications on topics such as nuclear risk reduction, sanctions and disarmament and he has well-recognized expertise in nuclear weapon risk, nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear arms control and disarmament.

Ms. Mackby is a senior fellow in international security at the Federation of American Scientists. Ms. Mackby has worked on international security, non-proliferation and arms control issues at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the Conference on Disarmament and other bodies of the United Nations.

I would like first to invite the first panellist for today, Mr. Wilfred Wan of UNIDIR, to make his presentation.

**Mr. Wan** (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research): Thank you for this opportunity to speak in front of the Conference on Disarmament virtually, on the topic of nuclear weapon risk reduction and on the ongoing work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in this area. Our work is being conducted with the support of Australia, Finland, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland and with substantive engagement with a number of States, for which we are very grateful.

Some of you have heard me speak on this subject in a number of different venues. In the last few years, it is striking how much the dialogue has evolved in a rather short time. That really reflects the interest in and work on the topic, as well as the progress made by a number of State-led initiatives. I hope that my talk today will add to the discussion and provide a little more food for thought.

First, I will begin with a very brief background on nuclear risk and risk sources: we define “nuclear weapon risk” as the risk of nuclear weapon use, of a detonation event by any means, whether intentional or inadvertent. Risk exists as a function of probability and consequence, with nuclear use seen as a low-probability, but high-consequence, event. However, it is difficult to offer a precise objective quantification of probability for a number of reasons. These include the lack of any extensive empirical record of nuclear weapon use outside of testing and the limited information available on near misses, false alarms and accidents that have taken place.

Probability models also struggle to account for the range of possibilities related to a detonation event, including, for instance, the types of conventional conflict that could escalate. And risk sources themselves are quite dynamic and ever-changing.

So when we talk about the probability of use increasing, what are the features, the criteria, the parameters and the benchmarks that guide us in our assessment? We tend to look at trends across the nuclear and security landscape, and there are few that are quite relevant here. The first is broad geopolitical circumstance, that is, poor relations among some nuclear-armed and nuclear-allied States, as well as the tension and the possibility of conflict across a number of geographic contexts, which can impact on a number of different nuclear-weapon-use scenarios.

Secondly, there are the developments concerning nuclear weapons themselves, in terms of their capabilities and their roles. Modernization programmes involving nuclear weapons and related systems seem to increase their usability in the eyes of some, by making them more reliable, more accurate and more flexible across platforms and theatres, with higher-precision and lower-yield payloads, for instance, seemingly being incorporated in plans for battlefield use against military targets. Nuclear weapons also continue to play a central role in State doctrines and security strategies, and this is exacerbated by differing interpretations about what those strategies are precisely, which can drive misperception and misunderstanding.

A third trend is broader technological developments, which can have destabilizing effects, raising the possibility of entanglement of nuclear capabilities and non-nuclear capabilities. This includes the reality of offensive cyberoperations, as well as unknown factors regarding the vulnerabilities of nuclear weapons systems. There is also increased activity in space, which can complicate the environment in which nuclear assets and dual-use assets operate, as well as the existence of precision-guided conventional weapons and other long-range capabilities that can contribute to potential confusion about the nature of payloads and targets.

A fourth factor to mention here is simply “others”, including the possibility of human error, the limits of our understanding and luck. These are especially relevant, as improved capabilities increase the complexity and tightly coupled nature of nuclear weapons and related systems. They also shorten decision-making time, which can exacerbate the possibility of errors, both human and technical – and I would add to that list the continued secrecy surrounding nuclear weapons programmes, which can ultimately limit the quality of risk assessment efforts.

So, given these different sources and drivers of risk, how do we engage in risk reduction? We must certainly acknowledge the challenges that lie in taking risk reduction forward. These are in part linked to the dynamism and the subjectivity of risk. Sources of risk, for instance, exist in the eye of the beholder. For some, de-alerting may be an obvious risk reduction measure as, for instance, it lengthens the time for launches, it lessens the possibility of accidents and, simply, the lowering of operational readiness can, in their view, extend escalation ladders.

For others, however, de-alerting can impact deterrence credibility and strategic stability, which can lead to adversarial aggression and risk by other means. Of course, many would argue that deterrence itself has inherent risks because of the reliance on the credible threat of use, as well as reliance on capabilities. Certainly, I have my views on some of these topics. But the existence of different viewpoints can provide a challenge to collective action.

Risk is also ever-changing and a moving target. That is a challenge, not only for risk assessment, but also for deriving risk reduction policy. In particular, the full impact of technology on nuclear weapons systems, including reliance on artificial intelligence and the incorporation of space-based assets in early warning systems, is yet to be determined. Ultimately, perceptions of risk are informed by national perspectives, priorities and strategic cultures.

We may ask whether the latter are defined based on the same or similar benchmarks or approaches; the answer is “no”. Accordingly, some States may have a higher level of risk acceptance. Some may choose to wield risk as a weapon – this is the essence of brinksmanship. This also means that some States will focus on particular aspects of risk, which is not necessarily a bad thing, as it shows where movement may be feasible and where there may be a convergence of political will.

That said, from a research perspective, I think it is important to have a holistic perspective, so as to identify the universe of nuclear risks that we should be concerned about as a starting point. These challenges do not mean that risk reduction is a futile endeavour; rather, they underline the fact that risk awareness and risk assessments are critical parts of risk reduction.

There is also a need to acknowledge that risk takes different forms in different spaces and contexts as, ultimately, the nuclear characteristics and immediate security environments surrounding particular States will reveal how those States define and perceive risk. There is no one-size-fits-all solution across situations.

These challenges can also underline that it is important to increase understanding of how doctrines, policies, modernization efforts and activities that are used ostensibly to deter aggression and reduce risk from a national security perspective can be perceived externally; and that they can have unintended effects and impact the risk of use from a global perspective. For instance, by driving adversarial responses that further action-reaction dynamics or technology- or arms-race dynamics, they can also help to increase the possibility of crisis or, in some cases, lower nuclear-use thresholds.

Difficult conversations around these different perceptions of risk can therefore help to identify the common concerns and priorities that can serve as a basis for action, including around misunderstanding, miscalculation and misperception, and fundamentally to reorient how States think about risk and the role of nuclear weapons. They can also spur States to take action on particular systems and technologies of concern. So, at least in this way, the dynamism of risk can be positive, because it presents new frontiers for potential joint exploration and interests.

So, which should be the first practical steps taken by States in order to reduce nuclear risk? In one of our recent publications, we talk about four broad areas of activities for States: (1) increasing strategic engagement; (2) preserving, formalizing and developing policies of restraint; (3) enhancing use of notifications, signals and crisis communication channels; and (4) committing to reduce risk of nuclear use.

I will focus on steps 1 and 4, because I think they are more relevant in the context of activity in the Conference on Disarmament. Step 1 is about increasing strategic engagement; this is a link to a recognition that the current environment provides obvious challenges to efforts to reduce stockpiles or to drastically reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies. These steps and others to strengthen arms control and revitalize disarmament require a level of trust among nuclear-armed States that is currently lacking.

Strategic dialogue and engagement, however, are more feasible in the short term, in that they involve no constraining of capability. At the same time, exchange between States at multiple levels, including military-to-military, can address emerging uncertainties or chip away at the strategic unpredictability that exists. States could discuss areas of concern, allowing frank exchange and creating a regularized dialogue, which could provide contours for future agreements, as these processes can take years. For instance, the United States-Soviet experience with the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks negotiations was built on a similar conceptual foundation.

In the meantime, strategic engagement can also locate areas where common ground is possible, for instance, in conflict avoidance, in crisis management and in communications. It may allow States to revisit hotlines, accords on incidents at sea or agreements on prevention of dangerous military activities and consider how these can be updated.

We have certainly seen some progress here in the context of the five permanent members of the Security Council and strategic risk reduction, for instance, and their exchange on nuclear doctrines over the last few years can be a foundation for further transparency and information-sharing both among themselves and with non-nuclear-weapon States. This process can, furthermore, facilitate the joint exploration of particular systems of concern or other issues, such as modernization plans. There is also value in other configurations of States considering doctrine and broader strategic threat perceptions, including with nuclear-armed States outside of the context of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

On step 4, on an explicit commitment to reduce the risk of nuclear use, there remains a need to develop common definitions, understandings and priorities in risk reduction to ensure that States are speaking the same language, including in looking at non-nuclear capabilities and domains. Doing so could facilitate consideration of how particular technologies of concern can impact strategic stability, as well as the best means to address this. This can allow States to explore codes of conduct or codes of responsibility.

An explicit commitment can also help to create more stakeholders and to produce greater capacity and expertise in risk reduction. You can look at nuclear disarmament verification as an example of these processes. Initiatives like Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament and the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament offer critical means through which States can develop concrete risk reduction ideas and proposals. In that connection, I would refer you to the working paper on the topic that has recently been tabled.

Concepts like strategic risk reduction that have emerged out of these processes have allowed there to be a focus on concerns about misunderstanding, for instance, as well as the role of conflict dynamics in nuclear risk. All of this is valuable in developing bespoke measures linked to regional and subregional security dynamics. Ultimately, risk reduction requires simultaneous activities of different types – strategic, operational, political and



technical – at multiple levels – national, bilateral, regional and multilateral – by all actors – nuclear-armed and non-nuclear weapons States alike.

This commitment can also help to strengthen an overall culture of accountability in the nuclear space, including at the national level, where States can focus, for instance, on ways to limit the salience of nuclear weapons in security. This too is relevant for States of all types. This can also allow States to frame the issue from a more risk-centred point of view that considers how continuing developments in capabilities can be interpreted in this environment and, consequently, how they impact risk, including in the longer term. It might also allow States to re-evaluate nuclear safety and security issues in cyber technologies and other new or other developing technological aspects, for instance.

It makes a lot of sense to continue the conversation on this topic in the Conference on Disarmament, especially under the umbrella of agenda item 2. But States could also create a dedicated space for it, to ensure high-level attention to the topic, which would elevate these risk reduction efforts, as was done with the nuclear security summit series, for instance. Risk reduction has certainly been given a lot of attention in this review cycle under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But I think it is important to extend beyond the Treaty to involve all nuclear-armed States and to have the process stand on its own; an international conference on the topic would help to provide a benchmark for progress.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Wan for his presentation. While we wait for a connection to our second panellist, I will open the floor to delegations for the discussion on this topic. Our first speaker is the distinguished delegate of Iraq, on behalf of the Group of 21.

**Mr. Al-Taii (Iraq):** I have the honour to deliver a statement on behalf of the Group of 21 on nuclear disarmament.

The Group of 21 reiterates that the Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament and, in that context, stresses that its highest priority on the Conference on Disarmament agenda is nuclear disarmament.

The Group reiterates its deep concern about the danger posed to the survival of humankind by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use and proliferation will remain.

The Group reiterates its position as conveyed in its previous statements to the Conference on Disarmament and recalls the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly and first special session on disarmament and the very first resolution of the General Assembly of 1946, adopted unanimously, which called for the elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals.

The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement that are members of the Group recall the 2012 Declaration of the sixteenth summit of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Declaration and Final Document of the seventeenth summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, held on Margarita Island, Venezuela, on September 2016, and the Final Document of the eighteenth Mid-Term Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, on April 2018.

Furthermore, the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 1996, concluded that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. In this regard, the Group recalls its strong support for General Assembly resolution 75/66 on follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

The Millennium Declaration of 2000 also reaffirmed the commitment of States Members of the United Nations to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons.

The Group welcomes the formal proclamation, for the first time in history, of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace, on the occasion of the second summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held in Havana,

Cuba, on 28 and 29 January 2014, which included a commitment by all States of that region to promote nuclear disarmament as a priority objective and to contribute to general and complete disarmament. It is hoped that this proclamation will be followed by other political proclamations of zones of peace in other regions of the world. The Group welcomes the Political Declaration of Quito, adopted at the fourth summit of CELAC, held in Quito, Ecuador, on 27 January 2016, which reaffirms, *inter alia*, the Community's commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security, political independence and nuclear disarmament conducive to general, total and verifiable disarmament.

The Group also welcomes the Political Declaration of Punta Cana, adopted at the fifth summit of CELAC, held in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, on 25 January 2017, in which the member States reaffirm, *inter alia*, their commitment to achieving a total prohibition on and the elimination of nuclear weapons. They reaffirm their commitment to the consolidation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace and highlight the region's character as the first-ever zone free of nuclear weapons, established pursuant to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The Group welcomes the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco on 14 February 2017 in Mexico, in the framework of the twenty-fifth session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Group also welcomes the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, signed in Cairo, Egypt, in 1996. The Treaty, which came into effect on 15 July 2009, seeks to prevent the stationing of nuclear explosive devices and prohibit the testing of nuclear weapons and the dumping of radioactive waste on the continent. For the purpose of ensuring compliance with the obligations under the Treaty, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy was established.

The Group, while noting the steps taken by nuclear-weapon States towards the reduction of their arsenals, reiterates its deep concern over the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament and the lack of progress achieved by the nuclear-weapon States towards accomplishing the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The Group stresses the importance of effective implementation of concrete measures leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world. This requires renewed political will by the international community towards accelerated progress on nuclear disarmament. The Group hopes that all States will seize all opportunities towards this end.

The Group welcomes the convening and the results of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament held on 26 September 2013 and reaffirms the related resolutions 70/34, 72/251, 73/40, 74/54 and 75/45 on follow-up to the meeting. As the former Secretary-General of the United Nations rightly mentioned in the Conference on Disarmament in 2015, "The high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament demonstrated that this issue remains a major international priority and deserves attention at the highest levels". In this vein, the Group fully supports the goals of these resolutions, in particular, the call for an urgent decision by the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on nuclear disarmament, particularly a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

The Group also welcomes the decision to convene, in New York on a date to be decided, a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament to review the progress made in this regard. The Group welcomes with appreciation the establishment of September 26 as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, and the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly organized every year to mark and promote the Day, highlighting the events held around the world to celebrate it, and calls on Governments, parliaments and civil society to take further action each year to commemorate the Day. In this context, the Group recalls its working paper on nuclear disarmament, contained in documents CD/2063, CD/2067, CD/2133, CD/2171 and CD/2195.

The Group reaffirms the importance of the multilateral disarmament machinery. It notes the report of the Open-Ended Working Group mandated by the General Assembly to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations towards the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons and hopes that it will contribute towards negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament and, in particular, on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

The Group takes note of the entry into force on 22 January 2021 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and also notes that 86 States had already signed the Treaty and 52 States had ratified or acceded to it by that date. In this regard, the States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Treaty are fully committed to its implementation and to promoting its universalization in order to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Group expresses its deepest concern over the immediate, indiscriminate, and massive death and destruction that would be caused by any nuclear weapon detonation and the long-term catastrophic consequences it would have on human health, environment and other vital economic resources, which would thus endanger the life of present and future generations. In this regard, the Group believes that the full realization of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons must underpin all approaches, efforts and international commitments towards nuclear disarmament, on the basis of an inclusive process involving all States.

The Group concurs with the former United Nations Secretary-General that there is growing understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and, in this regard, welcomes the hosting of the Conferences on this subject, convened in Oslo on 4 and 5 March 2013, in Mexico on 13 and 14 February 2014 and in Vienna on 8 and 9 December 2014.

The States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons welcome the spirit of the findings of the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, together with the pledges and national statements made by many States during and since the third Conference, held in Vienna, aimed at securing progress on nuclear disarmament through the negotiation of legally binding effective measures, particularly a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, with a specified framework of time. The States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Treaty call on all nuclear-weapon-States that are parties to the Treaty to implement the unequivocal undertaking they have given to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties are committed to under article VI of the Treaty. Given the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and unacceptable risks and threats associated with the detonation of a nuclear weapon, the States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will endeavour to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders in efforts to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Group notes the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

The Group, stressing its strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, underscores the urgent need to commence negotiations on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament without delay. In this context, the Group reaffirms its full readiness to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including on a convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to their global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination, with a specified time framework.

In this regard, the Group emphasizes that the fundamental principles of transparency, verification and irreversibility shall be applied to all nuclear disarmament measures. The Group reaffirms that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are substantively interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

The Group of 21 emphasizes that progress in nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, in all its aspects, is essential to strengthening international peace and security. It reaffirms that efforts towards nuclear disarmament, global and regional approaches and confidence-building measures complement each other and should, wherever possible, be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security.

The Group reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Pending the achievement of the complete elimination of such weapons, the Group reaffirms the urgent need for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to effectively assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons as a matter of high priority. The Group expresses concern that, despite the commitment of the nuclear-weapon States and long-standing requests by non-nuclear-weapon States to receive such legally binding assurances, no tangible progress has been achieved in this regard. It is a matter of more concern that non-nuclear-weapon States have been subject, implicitly or explicitly, to nuclear threats by some nuclear-weapon States, contrary to their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. The Group also calls for the commencement of negotiations in order to reach agreement on an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 75/75.

The Group expresses its concern about the strategic defence doctrines of the nuclear-weapon States and a group of States which sets out rationales for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. There is, therefore, a genuine and urgent need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies so as to minimize the risk that these weapons will ever be used again and to facilitate the process of their elimination. In this regard, the Group recalls its strong support of the objectives of General Assembly resolutions 75/57 of 14 December 2020 on reducing nuclear danger and 73/60 of 13 December 2018 on decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems.

The Group of 21 stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, including by all nuclear-weapon States, which, inter alia, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. The Group reiterates that, if the objectives of the Treaty are to be fully realized, the continued commitment to nuclear disarmament of all States signatories, especially the nuclear-weapon States, will be essential.

The Group reaffirms the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in these areas. In this regard, the Group strongly supports the objectives of General Assembly resolution 75/47 of 17 December 2020 on the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty express their disappointment and deep concern that three States parties, including two States that bear special responsibility as Treaty depositary and co-sponsors of the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, blocked consensus on the draft outcome document of the ninth Review Conference, including on the process to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as contained in the resolution on the Middle East. This could undermine efforts towards strengthening the Treaty regime as a whole. The States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Treaty reaffirm that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East continues to constitute the basis for the establishment of such a zone and remains valid until fully implemented. The States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Treaty also express their serious concern over the lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution and, in accordance with paragraph 6 of that resolution, “call upon all States party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to extend their

cooperation and to exert their utmost efforts with a view to ensuring the early establishment by regional parties of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction” and reaffirm that the co-sponsors of the resolution must take all the necessary measures to fully implement it without further delay.

The States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Treaty express their utmost concern that the persistent lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution, contrary to the decisions made at the relevant Review Conferences, erodes the credibility of the Treaty and disrupts the delicate balance among its three pillars, taking into account that the indefinite extension of the Treaty is inextricably linked to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. In this context, the States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the NPT reaffirm the urgency of the accession of Israel to the Treaty without further delay and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. While the lack of agreement on an outcome document could undermine the Treaty regime, the States of the Group of 21 that are parties to the Treaty emphasize the continued validity of all relevant commitments made in 1995, 2000 and 2010, particularly the unequivocal undertaking to work towards nuclear disarmament, and call for their full implementation without further delay.

The Group also wishes to reaffirm the inalienable right of each State to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

The Group reiterates its readiness to make constructive contributions to the work of the Conference, and in this regard wishes to recall the contents of documents CD/36/Rev.1, CD/116, CD/341, CD/819, CD/1388, CD/1462, CD/1570, CD/1571, CD/1923, CD/1938, CD/1959, CD/1999, CD/2044, CD/2063, CD/2099, CD/2135, CD/2168 and CD/2192, presented by the Group of 21 towards this end.

The Group takes note of the substantive and interactive informal discussions on nuclear disarmament held in the Conference on Disarmament from 21 to 23 May 2014 pursuant to the schedule of activities of the 2014 session, contained in document CD/1978, on 11 and 18 June 2015 pursuant to the schedule of activities of the 2015 session, contained in document CD/2021, and from 8 to 10 August 2017 under the working group on the way ahead, established pursuant to the decision contained in document CD/2090.

In view of the Group’s strong commitment to nuclear disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons, it reiterates the following concrete steps: (a) reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the complete elimination of nuclear weapons; (b) elimination of the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines; (c) adoption of measures by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger, such as de-alerting nuclear weapons and decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear-weapons systems; (d) negotiation of a universal, unconditional and legally-binding instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; and (e) negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, with a specified framework of time.

To conclude, the Group of 21 highlights with satisfaction the events that have taken place around the world to mark 26 September each year as International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons devoted to furthering that objective, including by enhancing public awareness and education about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the necessity of their total elimination, in order to mobilize international efforts towards achieving that goal. In this context, it calls upon member States to participate every year at the highest possible level in the one-day high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate and promote this international day and also invites Member States, the United Nations system, civil

society, academia, parliamentarians, the mass media and individuals to take additional measures every year to commemorate this date.

**The President:** I thank the delegate of Iraq for his statement and now we turn back to our panellists for today. I invite our second panellist, Ms. Janifer Mackby from the Federation of American Scientists, to make her presentation.

**Ms. Mackby** (Federation of American Scientists): Mr. President, it is a great privilege for me to speak here, as I worked in the Conference on Disarmament as secretary of the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the group of scientific experts, so it is a great pleasure to be back in the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to make a few brief remarks on the discussions you have been holding on nuclear disarmament verification. I understand that one of the speakers, Mr. Osmundsen, the Special Envoy of Norway on Disarmament Affairs and chair-designate of the Group of Governmental Experts, spoke to you about the Group.

I believe that he mentioned previously the possibility of a group of scientific experts being established, and I must say that the previous group of scientific experts here in the Conference on Disarmament provided an excellent example that you might wish to examine. It showed very well how scientists from around the world can work cooperatively to prepare the way for an eventual treaty. They did this during the cold war, meeting for some 20 years in the Palais des Nations and, for much of that time, as now, the political conditions were not ripe for any treaty negotiations. They presented scientific papers and conducted three complex technical tests of a global monitoring system, which became the backbone of the international monitoring system of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. If anyone would be interested in further information on the work of that group, please feel free to contact me.

Now I will speak about cyberspace and outer space. The recent cyberattack in the United States that forced the shutdown of a major pipeline exposed vulnerabilities in the that country's electrical grid that could pose what one Senator called an existential threat to the country's energy system. The public is thinking much more about the inconvenience caused by this incident because they could not find fuel stations with any fuel. They are not thinking about the risks of such cyberattacks and the real existential threat of nuclear weapon systems – and perhaps the nuclear policy community is not thinking much about this either.

Each nuclear force is composed of weapons, early warning radars, launch facilities and the top officials who can initiate a nuclear exchange, and connecting them all is an extended network of communications and data-processing systems, which all rely on cyberspace.

The threat of a cyberattack on nuclear command, control and communications (NC3) systems triggers the greatest concern. Because these systems use many devices and operating systems of different origins and ages, encompassing numerous software updates and patches which are updated over time, they present multiple vectors for attack. Electronic components can be modified with malware by hostile actors during production, transit or installation, and the whole system is dependent to a considerable degree on the electrical grid, which itself is vulnerable to cyberattack and is far less protected. It is outside the control of defence officials and directly affects nuclear systems. Any entity that relies so greatly on computers in cyberspace cannot be made 100 per cent invulnerable to an attack.

Cybertechnologies, loosely speaking, include computer networks and digital systems. Attack methods that could affect the decision-making process for launching a nuclear weapon include compromising, manipulating or stealing data, jamming communication channels and spoofing. These affect communications between command and control centres, from command stations to missile platforms and missiles. They can interfere with telemetry data, intelligence, analytics centres, labs, positions and navigation systems, among others.

Hacking into data can reveal sensitive information on layouts of facilities, design and operational commands, personnel and others. It could destroy control systems and submarines or other platforms, and the damage might not be discovered until the point of launch and interfere with their functioning.

A growing reliance on computers, code and software for all aspects of nuclear weapons management, from early warning through protection and analysis of data and up to authorization and firing of the weapons provides possible ways that nuclear systems might be compromised. Hackers could disable weapons and systems, indirectly spoof information flow or communications to prevent orders reaching the weapons or access and utilize highly sensitive information about weapons systems and operational procedures. And there is always the possibility that an insider could introduce malware into critical system, either accidentally or on purpose.

A study by Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) notes that cyberattacks could lead to false warnings of attack, interrupt critical communications or access to information, compromise nuclear planning or delivery systems or even allow an adversary to take control of a nuclear weapon. This sounds impossible, but it is not. The speed, stealth and unpredictability of cyberattacks and the difficulty of attributing any particular cyberattack make it increasingly difficult to anticipate and defend against cyberthreats.

Cyberthreats to nuclear weapons and related systems, including nuclear planning systems, early warning systems, communication systems and delivery systems, increase the risk of unauthorized use of a nuclear weapon, increase the risk of nuclear use as a result of false warnings and could undermine confidence in the nuclear deterrent affecting strategic stability.

As a Chatham House study pointed out, these risks raise doubts about the reliability and integrity of nuclear weapons systems in a time of crisis, regarding the ability to launch a weapon, prevent an inadvertent launch, maintain command and control of all military systems, transmit information and other communications and ensure the maintenance and reliability of such systems.

You can find many examples of incidents of cyberattacks. Some experts have surmised that, if a nuclear-armed State starts to believe that its critical systems are experiencing malicious acts or are infested with malware, its leaders might not trust the information from its own early warning systems in a crisis and might therefore misinterpret the nature of an enemy attack.

Fearing the loss of command control and communications, this could lead them to overreact and possibly launch their nuclear weapon out of fear that they are at risk of a pre-emptive strike. In a rapid escalation of events, they could believe that they should use them or will lose them. This seems a bit extreme but it is not out of the realm of possibility.

An adversary could also use a cyberattack to disrupt early warning systems to mask an incoming nuclear attack. In 1980, there was a false warning of an incoming nuclear attack caused by the failure of a Norac computer chip. An adversary could also use a cyber technology to interrupt communications between the political decision-makers and the military leaders and communication systems. This could prevent the flow of information needed to make an informed decision about how to respond to a nuclear attack, how to execute the response or how to deliver orders to launch.

Moreover, third parties, such as terrorist organizations or proxy states, could try to cause early warning systems to generate false readings of missile launches and incite a global nuclear crisis. Also, jamming or other electronic warfare measures can interfere with satellites, which are key to nuclear communications and early warning systems.

Capacities to conduct cyberoperations for espionage, covert operations and attack are attractive for many reasons. Cyberoperations are usually effective, relatively inexpensive, not lethal and not clearly illegal. Cyberoperations seem generally less provocative than the use of human spies and kinetic weapons.

Moreover, because the public of the targeted country will likely not know about the attack, leaders do not face public pressure to respond. The basic point is that we should be concerned that nuclear weapons might be used due to miscalculations or as a result of interference from third party actors.

So of course, cybersecurity is linked to outer space security, in particular with regard to information flowing to and from satellites. The increasing number of State and non-State

hackers and cheap access to computer technologies increase the risk of disruption to these interactions, making cyberspace and space-based infrastructure vulnerable to attack.

Within the past decade, more countries and private actors have acquired and employed counterspace capabilities in novel applications, which now pose a greater existential threat to critical space assets. For example, if you think about the global positioning system (GPS) on which we depend so highly, if the downlink from the satellite is spoofed, false data can be injected into the target's communication systems and fool the receiver, GPS, into calculating an incorrect position.

Although there have not been physical attacks in space, there have been cyber- and electronic incidents. Threats could include electromagnetic pulses, electronic threats like jamming or spoofing to damage transmission and reception of data, or the transmission of false data. Spacecraft could be vulnerable to command intrusions, giving bad instructions to destroy or manipulate basic controls, to payload control and denial of service; malware could be used to infect systems on the ground, like satellite control centres, and links between them and the spacecraft could be spoofed, disguising communications from an untrusted source as a trusted one, or interrupted or delayed communication could be caused by malicious actors.

As more communication satellite capabilities come online via space, the group of actors could expand to include well-resourced non-State actors, like criminal groups seeking financial gain. The attacks are difficult to trace, so attribution is difficult. These cybervulnerabilities pose serious risks, not just for space-based assets themselves but also for ground-based critical infrastructure.

The threats could interfere with global economic development, as well as international security. This poses a risk unless all stakeholders, including private companies in the supply chain operating in space, implement cybersecurity best practices.

So we can say that there is an arms race in cyberspace and in space where each nuclear Power will try to improve its defences against a future cyberattack.

Due to the possible consequences of cyberrisks resulting from miscalculation or unauthorized launch, which could become a catastrophic nuclear risk, it is urgent to address them. This is a global problem that should be addressed by the international community. States should try to agree on ways to integrate this catastrophic risk, perhaps right here in the Conference on Disarmament.

The NTI study suggests establishing norms to restrict the use of cyberweapons against nuclear weapons systems. Countries with nuclear weapons could pledge not to attack NC3 systems supporting the country's nuclear deterrent. As that would be difficult to verify, it also suggests that countries could agree to separate their conventional and nuclear systems and make clear that any attack on their nuclear system would lead to serious consequences.

Bilateral and multilateral dialogues could also be held to consider unilateral or reciprocal actions to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use that could result from cyberattacks. There could be international cooperation to improve early warning systems, including through military-to-military cooperation to further reduce the possibility of a cyber-induced false warning.

A number of experts believe that countries should work together to develop options to increase decision time in order to account for cyberthreats to early warning systems. United States and Russian ballistic missiles armed with nuclear warheads deployed on alert status can be fired and hit their targets within minutes. Of course, a nuclear ballistic missile cannot be recalled before it reaches its target. Leaders may have only minutes between warning of an attack and an actual nuclear detonation on their territory, which puts tremendous pressure on them to maintain a launch-on-warning/launch-under-attack strategy. This would be exacerbated with the use of hypersonic missiles. All countries with nuclear weapons are vulnerable to cyberattacks and the potential consequences of any nuclear launch due to miscalculation or unauthorized use, which would have global consequences.

So, although all States do not agree on definitions of offensive and defensive cyberweapons, some efforts have been made to develop norms to constrain the destabilizing use of cybertechnologies, which should be considered. In 2011, the United Nations



established a Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security to assess the dangers in cyberspace and consider measures to address them. The Group reported in 2013 that international law and, in particular, the Charter of the United Nations, is applicable in the field of information and communications technology.

Subsequently, a new Group of Governmental Experts working on the same topic was established and, in July 2015, it reported more comprehensively, with a set of norms that should govern behaviour in this area. It said that a State should not support information and communications technology activity contrary to its obligations under international law that intentionally damages critical infrastructure of another country. The Group called for the adoption of voluntary non-binding norms and, since then, the United Nations has reiterated the principles laid out in that 2015 report.

In 2017, the president of Microsoft called for a digital Geneva Convention, modelled on the post-Second World War Geneva Conventions, to protect civilians from the negative consequences of cyberattacks. And in 2018, President Macron of France initiated the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace. Also in 2018, the General Assembly established an open-ended working group on the subject.

It might seem difficult, but nuclear reduction risk in cybertechnology is something that the Conference on Disarmament might address as an international effort to minimize the risk to strategic stability. Cyberrisk reduction will also reduce nuclear risk. The nuclear-armed States, in particular, could start a discussion about the nature and implications of the cyber-, nuclear and space nexus and think about pursuing some confidence-building measures. Such a dialogue could help form the basis for more concrete measures like agreements between States not to target each other's nuclear information and communications technology systems with cybertechnology. This could prepare for broader bilateral or even multilateral arms control agreements in the cyber-, nuclear and possibly even space areas in the future, and possibly for talks that examine the area of emerging technological challenges to nuclear policies.

Given the current relations in the political sphere, that is easier said than done. But it certainly beats the alternative, as the challenges surrounding cyber-nuclear connections are advancing rapidly.

I will not go into the various initiatives that have been introduced in the Conference on Disarmament, proposals for a code of conduct, General Assembly resolutions or the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the subject, as you are all well aware of those. The Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities had difficulties producing a final report, and the Conference on Disarmament has had difficulty in approaching the subject, among others, even to discuss transparency and confidence-building measures or codes of conduct. But the 1967 Outer Space Treaty prohibits harmful interference, although it does not explicitly ban certain systems, other than weapons of mass destruction.

Security on earth depends on security in space. Some experts suggest the use of quantum encryption, which ensures communications, to reduce the vulnerability of these systems. Space is a global common, in which good governance is essential for all. International cooperation and partnership with both traditional and non-traditional allies, including States and international space supply chain stakeholders, to create sustainable norms and frameworks would be crucial to mitigating risk in the long term.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Mackby for her presentation and I also express my gratitude to both of our panellists for sharing with us their insightful and in-depth analysis, elucidating new and emerging risk factors which increase the dangers of the use of nuclear weapons in the twenty-first century. They have also outlined possible approaches aiming to reduce such risks.

I would now like to return to our list of speakers and continue the discussion on this important topic. The next speaker on the list is the distinguished delegate of Australia, Mr. Diwaka Prakash.

**Mr. Prakash** (Australia): Mr. President, Australia welcomes the move to discussions on substance and in particular, we welcome the opportunity to have these conversations on nuclear disarmament verification and risk reduction under agenda items 1 and 2.

As we did not speak last week on the previous topic, we briefly like to say that Australia considers that effective verification is an essential component in the effort to advance nuclear disarmament. We very much welcomed the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification adopted by consensus in 2019 and we were pleased to have an expert participating in the work of the new Group of Governmental Experts. We look forward to its first formal meeting later this year.

Turning to the topic of today's discussion, nuclear risk reduction, we like to thank Wilfred Wan of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) for his informative remarks, which provide some very useful context for this conversation, including by highlighting the key drivers of nuclear risk and the sorts of practical steps that States can take to reduce that risk. We would also like to take this opportunity to recognize more broadly the valuable work that UNIDIR is doing on this topic. Interest in practical ways of reducing nuclear risks is growing and the ongoing research by UNIDIR in identifying potential areas of common interest among States on this issue is a valuable contribution that Australia has been proud to support. We also very much thank Ms. Mackby of the Federation of American Scientists for her presentation, including the very interesting focus on the cyber- and outer space dimensions of risk reduction.

Australia was pleased to co-chair, with the Philippines, a workshop on virtual nuclear risk reduction through the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations last November. We are keen to use our experience to help build a better understanding around nuclear risk reduction ahead of the forthcoming Review Conference of States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and position it as an issue of convergence.

Mr. President, while much of the discussion on nuclear risk reduction takes place in the context of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conferences, useful conversations on this topic also took place in the Conference on Disarmament in 2018 in the context of subsidiary body 2. We would like to recall that in 2018, Conference on Disarmament member States agreed that further discussions on nuclear risk reduction were welcome.

Australia believes that discussion of nuclear risk reduction should be prioritized in 2021 and that we should focus our efforts on practical and feasible measures to reduce the risk posed by nuclear weapons.

As Mr. Wan highlighted in his remarks today, there are various initiatives under way in groups that are working on risk reduction and approaching the issue from different perspectives. Some think that risk reduction may be best handled bilaterally or within small groups, given the sensitivities involved. At the same time, countries without nuclear weapons have an interest in how risks are managed and how they can help to reduce tensions.

For some, the only way to reduce risk is to eliminate nuclear weapons – they may see a focus on risk reduction as potentially distracting attention away from nuclear disarmament. And others think that risk reduction initiatives could help to improve the environment from nuclear disarmament through better understanding about doctrine transparency and building trust.

Australia thinks it will be useful for member States to consider what role the Conference can play in nuclear risk reduction and how it could potentially contribute to risk reduction initiatives.

Mr. President, there are practical steps that we can and should take now to help build trust and bring States together to build a stronger basis for future progress. We think that non-nuclear-weapon States can play an important role in building trust, fostering dialogue and engaging in cooperative initiatives with each other and with nuclear-weapon States. But we urge nuclear-weapon States themselves to take the lead in demonstrating concrete results from nuclear disarmament. The current focus could usefully be on strategic stability, de-escalation and risk reduction, laying the ground for future reductions in nuclear weapons holdings.

We think that steps to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use could be useful in building confidence and stability while reducing tensions.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished delegate of Australia and now I give the floor to the next speaker on the list, Mr. Aidan Liddle, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Liddle** (United Kingdom): Mr. President, the United Kingdom attaches great importance to this topic. Before addressing the matter at hand, however, I would like to say a few words on preventing an arms race in outer space – though, as Ms. Mackby pointed out, the two issues are indeed related. The United Kingdom was pleased to see so many submissions to the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/36 on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. We believe that there is now a broad international consensus around the need to tackle threats to space systems. By seeking agreement on what might constitute responsible space behaviours by States, we could reduce the chances of misunderstanding, miscalculation and escalation driving an arms race in outer space or leading to conflict.

In our national submission, we set out examples of how responsible behaviours might reduce risks to space systems. The first of these was that anti-satellite (ASAT) missile testing could be considered unacceptable in any circumstance; but whenever an ASAT strike leads to the creation of debris that does not decay quickly, that would certainly be unacceptable, and indeed reckless. Should a State carry out such a test, then the United Kingdom would condemn it in the strongest of terms.

We look forward to having the opportunity to discuss this issue in more depth in future plenary meetings in this session.

Mr. President, turning now to the topic of today's thematic discussion, the prevention of nuclear war is a core agenda item of this Conference. The first preambular paragraph of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty stresses the need to "make every effort to avert the danger" of nuclear war. It is a matter that is clearly of great importance to us all. We therefore welcome the discussion on this topic in the Conference on Disarmament today.

In recent years, this question, expressed as "nuclear" or "strategic" risk reduction, has attracted significant international attention. The United Kingdom prefers the latter term, as it focusses more clearly on the prevention of nuclear war. As is stated in our recent Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, "the United Kingdom will continue to work internationally to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict and enhance mutual trust and security. We will champion strategic risk reduction and seek to create dialogue among States possessing nuclear weapons, and between States possessing nuclear weapons and non-nuclear-weapon States, to increase understanding and reduce the risk of misinterpretation and miscalculation."

At its core, then, strategic risk reduction is about reducing the risk of a nuclear conflict that neither side intended, expected or deliberately prepared for. It could be due to misinterpretation of an adversary's intentions, capabilities or actions, or through failure to foresee the consequences of ambiguous actions, military manoeuvres or the accumulation of irreversible threats in the heat of a crisis. It also recognises the need to lower the risk that conventional conflicts between States possessing nuclear weapons might escalate to the threshold where nuclear use is considered. Strategic risk reduction is not a substitute for disarmament, but it is vital activity in its own right and can help to create the environment to enable future disarmament.

We believe there are three elements to strategic risk reduction: first, building trust and confidence between States; second, increasing mutual understanding; and third, developing and using effective crisis management and prevention tools. These are all underpinned by measures to ensure the safety and security of nuclear weapons, which are a key responsibility of States that possess them.

Strategic risk reduction can be promoted through unilateral, bilateral and multilateral measures. All States can play their part. The United Kingdom has taken a number of practical measures to support risk reduction, including: the de-alerting and de-targeting of the United Kingdom nuclear deterrent, which contributes to lengthening the decision-making timeline

and reduces the risk of inadvertent escalation; engagement in formal risk reduction and incident prevention mechanisms with other States, such as hotlines, military-to-military channels and ballistic missile launch notification agreements; robust safety and security arrangements within the Defence Nuclear Enterprise, including independent safety and security regulators; and a commitment to transparency in our nuclear policy including explaining how and why decisions are made during reviews.

The United Kingdom also took the initiative in the establishment of the process being pursued by the nuclear-weapon States, known as the P5 Process, in 2009. This Process has proved an invaluable forum for increasing mutual comprehension on nuclear matters between the five “nuclear-weapon States” designated as such under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which contributes materially to strategic risk reduction. In the last three years, the Process has worked on further practical risk reduction measures, including the second phase of the glossary of nuclear-related terms, and exchanges on each State’s respective nuclear doctrines. These initiatives speak directly to the need to ensure that the nuclear-weapon States understand clearly the intention behind each other’s doctrines and capabilities, including areas of deliberate ambiguity, to avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation. They complement, but cannot substitute for, detailed bilateral strategic stability discussions between States, which are also crucial for preventing nuclear war.

To conclude, Mr. President, the United Kingdom welcomes any efforts by States, whether they possess nuclear weapons or not, and by civil society, to promote this important work. Groupings such as the Creating the Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative and the Stockholm Initiative are good examples. We look forward to deepening our discussions on this issue, both in this Conference and in the run-up to the Tenth Review Conference of States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Liddle for his statement and now I turn to our next speaker, the Ambassador of the United States of America, Mr. Robert Wood.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Risk reduction is an essential and necessary part of advancing disarmament efforts. As others have said, disarmament is not a simple matter of numbers – it is a process that has to move forward within the very challenging security environment in which we live.

The United States views risk reduction, therefore, in these two lights. First, we need to have credible mechanisms to share information and communicate with other nuclear-weapon States and manage potential crises. Second, we have to do the hard work of improving that security environment by building on these risk reduction mechanisms.

The United States works incessantly to increase transparency and predictability to avoid potential miscalculation among nuclear-weapon States and other possessor States through strategic dialogues, risk-reduction communication channels and sharing of best practices related to nuclear weapons safety and security. Our current security challenges underscore the need to reduce the risk of unintended and miscalculated use of a nuclear weapon or activities that could lead to such use.

The experience of the United States and Russia should not be the only risk reduction template examined, but it is the most robust one. With Russia, the United States has working hotlines, working groups on deconfliction, expert-level discussions on nuclear postures and strategic security and a whole series of confidence-building measures in the form of agreements on missile launches and other potentially dangerous activities, including incidents at sea. Collectively, these agreements and arrangements help to make nuclear conflict a much more remote outcome.

As you all know, the United States worked with Russia to extend the New START for an additional five years. We believe that the most immediate next priority to further reduce nuclear risks is to reinvigorate bilateral dialogues with our strategic competitors. We are therefore pleased that President Biden and President Putin have agreed to begin a dialogue on strategic stability.

We wish the story were similar for China. Despite the dramatic build-up by the People’s Republic of China of its nuclear arsenal, that country unfortunately continues to resist discussing nuclear risk reduction bilaterally with the United States. For our part, we

have sought and will continue to seek in-depth bilateral exchanges on nuclear doctrines, proposed missile launch notification agreements and more robust crisis communication channels. To date, Beijing has not been willing to engage meaningfully or establish expert discussions similar to those we have with Russia. We sincerely hope that will change.

Multilateral dialogues such as the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative and the process being pursued by the nuclear-weapon States, known as the P5 process, while important, are no substitute for strong and sustained bilateral channels that enable franker, more sensitive exchanges on specific flashpoints, postures, and policies between subject matter experts.

Overall, we believe that bilateral discussions can foster the development of specific measures aimed at reducing the risks of misperception and miscalculation between nuclear-weapon States. They may also lay the groundwork for formal arms control treaties and progress on nuclear disarmament.

Moving to the security environment more generally, a full examination of why and how international security has eroded would take far more time than we have today – as would a comprehensive discussion of what to do about it. I will, however, highlight one of the real efforts the United States has launched to make the changes necessary to move disarmament forward on the disarmament agenda.

Many of you participate in the new initiative, Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament, and can speak to how it has facilitated genuine dialogue that has become all too rare in more formal venues like the Conference on Disarmament. The United States continues to fully support the initiative and its efforts to identify constructive and actionable proposals for progress on nuclear disarmament. We understand that it has no authority over other forums, but see it as a means to come up with new ideas that might eventually be advanced in such forums.

The initiative examines different, but interrelated, aspects of the security environment that influence progress on further reductions and disarmament. The three subgroups are chaired by a diverse set of countries, and each is supported by non-governmental expert facilitators.

Subgroup one looks at reducing perceived incentives for States to retain, acquire or increase their holdings of nuclear weapons and increasing incentives to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. It is co-chaired by the Netherlands and Morocco.

Subgroup two considers mechanisms to bolster non-proliferation efforts and build confidence in and further advance nuclear disarmament. It is co-chaired by the Republic of Korea and the United States.

The third subgroup addresses interim measures to reduce the risks associated with nuclear weapons. It is co-chaired by Finland and Germany.

Each subgroup is making steady progress in addressing the tasks laid out in its programme of work. While the co-chairs are still developing the exact form that the deliverables will take, we believe they will finalize recommendations from each subgroup late in 2022 and release those findings early in 2023, in accordance with the notional timeline discussed at the November 2020 plenary meeting.

Mr. President, some have argued that risk reduction efforts are no substitute for nuclear disarmament, but that view sees risk reduction measures as separate from progress on disarmament.

I will end my remarks as I began them, by saying that risk reduction is an essential and necessary component of disarmament efforts and something we should all value as a means to help prevent the potential devastation of nuclear war. The United States will continue to reach out to ensure that we do our part to prevent such a crisis; we appreciate the support from partners in our efforts and would welcome engagement from other nuclear-weapon States to this end.

I would like to make one final point. Like our British colleagues, the United States strongly supports the development of transparency and confidence measures, as well as

norms and best practices in outer space, and believes that General Assembly resolution 75/36 on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour provides positive momentum for such an endeavour.

We also echo the concerns expressed by my colleague from the United Kingdom about the serious danger posed by destructive anti-satellite tests that create long-lived debris, a threat which we discuss in our national submission. Such actions would be extremely irresponsible and could impact the outer space environment and negatively affect the ability of States to use space for peaceful purposes.

For our part, the United States will continue to work with allies and partners in space to enhance the safety, security, and sustainability of outer space for all countries.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Wood for his statement and now give the floor to Ambassador Baumann of Switzerland.

**Mr. Baumann** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, the issue of nuclear risk reduction is an important topic under agenda item 2. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to thank you for inviting us to discuss this topic today. Switzerland has been active in this area for several years, including as part of the Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Along with our partners, Chile, Malaysia, Nigeria, New Zealand and Sweden, we have submitted to the General Assembly numerous resolutions on de-alerting nuclear weapons, which call for practical and concrete steps to be taken to decrease the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems. We have also worked with research institutes such as the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and other experts who have developed concrete proposals on nuclear risk reduction. One promising avenue is to work towards reliable, solid and trustworthy crisis communication technologies, a sort of multilateral hotline system that could be used to communicate during a crisis to avoid nuclear escalation.

Moreover, and this will be the main focus of my statement today, Switzerland has endeavoured to move forward with the topic of nuclear risk reduction in the context of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, in preparation for the tenth Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. Based on the Berlin declaration and its 22 Stepping Stones, Switzerland drafted a working paper as part of the Initiative. This was officially submitted last week on behalf of the Stockholm Initiative participants and a number of additional States. The drafting process revealed a consensus among Stockholm Initiative participants on the fact that risk reduction was both urgently needed in the current situation and a promising subject for agreement at the Review Conference.

The starting point for the paper is that international concern about nuclear risks has come to the forefront in recent years and that there is common agreement on the need to address them as a matter of priority. Just as Mr. Wan and Ms. Mackby indicated in their presentations at the start of the meeting, the paper emphasizes that nuclear risks have increased owing to a number of factors, including the geopolitical situation, developments related to nuclear weapons themselves, including their capabilities and their role in doctrines, and potentially destabilizing technological developments. The paper also reiterates that nuclear risk reduction is part of broader disarmament efforts and brings the objective of total elimination of nuclear weapons closer.

This applies specifically and directly to the implementation of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. For example, action 5 of the action plan adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, under which the nuclear-weapon States committed to accelerating concrete progress on a number of steps leading to nuclear disarmament, includes measures relating to both nuclear risk reduction and nuclear arms reduction. It therefore provides a sound basis for making progress on nuclear risk reduction. In addition, each step towards a safer world and each measure to reduce nuclear risks can also carve out the space to make more significant reductions.

That brings me back to the working paper, which sets out a wide range of potential ways of dealing with the nuclear risk and offers a package of measures to address the multilateral nature of the issue. The paper also establishes the principle that, while nuclear-

weapon States play a key role, non-nuclear-weapon States can and must be included in such efforts.

The paper has five sections on the practical steps to be taken. Firstly, we propose language for a collective statement to be included in the final document of the tenth NPT Review Conference, expressing deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any new use of these weapons and stating that it is in the interest of humanity that nuclear weapons never be used again.

Secondly, we call for renewed commitment by the nuclear-weapon States and expanded dialogue on the risks. We propose that the tenth Review Conference should result in more specific, structured and results-oriented cooperation among the five nuclear-weapon States. We urge the nuclear-weapon States to expand their work in this area, include nuclear risk reduction as a standing agenda item for their meetings and establish specific related working groups.

Thirdly, we also propose support measures from all States parties, highlighting the fact that nuclear risk reduction is a shared responsibility and requires an inclusive approach.

Fourthly, we encourage additional research to find new partnerships and innovative approaches to dealing with the issue. We must build on the excellent work already done by our colleagues in academia and various think tanks.

Fifthly, we argue for a process to move forward with nuclear risk reduction in the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Nuclear risk reduction should become a standing agenda item, which would allow us to have structured results-oriented discussions, then take stock in 2025 on what has been achieved and make informed decisions on what still needs to be done.

The paper also includes proposals to extend the goal of nuclear risk reduction beyond the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the tenth Review Conference. It refers to a possible United Nations process. For the moment, this is only an idea, but it could highlight the need for the Review Conference to address this issue.

I would like to stress that we think it would be useful for the Conference on Disarmament to address these topics in detail, especially since the Conference includes a number of important players in the field that are not parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Of course, that will depend on the ability of the Conference to resume in-depth substantive work in the framework of a special process or body.

Before I conclude, I will simply say that I hope this working paper will be widely supported. It has already been co-sponsored by 20 States and can still be co-signed. We intend to use the paper as a basis for discussion with nuclear-weapon States, other States and other groups of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We hope it will allow us to further strengthen the dynamic around this subject and to use concrete language.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Switzerland. I now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Spain, Mr. Juan Manglano Aboín.

**Mr. Manglano Aboín (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*):** I would like, first of all, to thank the two panellists for their interesting remarks. Mr. President, the prevention of nuclear war has been a topic of discussion at the Conference on Disarmament for decades. However, little progress has been made in the area. We are, in fact, even unable to come to a consensus on how to address this agenda item or on which aspects of the prevention of nuclear war to include in our discussions.

In speaking of the prevention of nuclear war, my delegation would like to focus its remarks on two elements that are of great importance to Spain and that were, to a greater or lesser degree, present in the plans initially put forward by the presidency. I am referring to nuclear risk reduction, which has received some attention today, and the banning of the production of fissile material, which, although discussed little today, Spain considers to be an essential element of discussions on item 2 of the Conference's agenda.

I would therefore first like to stress that my delegation sees nuclear risk reduction as a tool – a tool for moving towards disarmament, building confidence and ensuring greater

security. It is not a substitute for the effective reduction of nuclear arsenals required under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, but rather supplements and reinforces it; hence its importance. We are referring here to all those measures that make the possibility of a conflict or accident involving nuclear weapons less likely. We can work on and discuss the classification, categorization or definition of the measures, but Spain believes that, as Mr. Wan has just shown in his statement, the work on this point has already been done, and it has been done with rigour and skill, as the catalogue of measures put forward, prepared by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, is extensive, detailed and comprehensive. It may, however, never be entirely comprehensive or definitive, because new weaknesses will always need to be identified.

However, Mr. President, what is truly critical and pressing is for measures to be put into practice and be made effective. The nuclear-weapon States must assume their responsibilities, fulfil their obligations and implement the measures catalogued so that they become a reality as soon as possible. What better setting than the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to demand that nuclear-weapon States live up to the commitments that they made when they ratified the Treaty and that they take specific steps to effectively reduce risk and thereby ensure the security of all, steps that supplement but, as I indicated earlier, do not replace their nuclear disarmament obligations.

Spain, as a part of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, specifically promotes dialogue between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States in order to minimize and manage nuclear risk, including through crisis prevention measures, an increase in decision-making times during crises and other measures that minimize vulnerabilities, especially in relation to disruptive technologies and cyberthreats. The foregoing is in line with the working paper recently submitted by Switzerland to the tenth Review Conference, which we, like the Swiss ambassador earlier, call on other States to sponsor, as Spain has already done. Accordingly, we favour setting up special lines of communication for information on nuclear risks, taking conventional and nuclear weapons offline and placing moratoriums on both fissile material production and nuclear testing.

Mr. President, as I mentioned earlier, in discussing the prevention of nuclear war, Spain would like to address the issue of a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and, specifically, the need for the Conference to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material as soon as possible. Such negotiations are needed urgently in order to prevent nuclear war. Moreover, as the Conference on Disarmament, we have a negotiating mandate, the Shannon mandate, which is still in effect, although my delegation senses that some States unfortunately do not want to start negotiations or, worse still, want to place conditions on them before they begin. Spain therefore encourages the Conference to begin negotiations on banning the production of fissile material as soon as possible, without prejudging or setting preconditions for the process. Spain calls for a universal, effectively verifiable, inclusive fissile cut-off treaty, with the broadest and most ambitious ban possible, that would also supplement and be consistent with the inalienable right of all parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty to engage in research and the development, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Spain would like to see a legally binding international instrument that requires existing material to be monitored and eliminated and bans the production of material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons, for if we only ban future production, we would be addressing non-proliferation, but not disarmament. We know that there are different views on such a treaty, and we are in favour of having a discussion about them. Spain is ready to negotiate as soon as possible and to start negotiations right now if necessary. Let us not, however, seek to place limitations on the definitions, scope, bodies, verification regime or other elements or to determine what they should be before negotiating.

Mr. President, before ending my statement, I would like to once again mention the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, which brings together a number of States, including Spain, that fully support starting negotiations and that call on States that produce fissile material to declare a moratorium on that production.



**The President:** I thank the distinguished delegate of Spain. We are nearing the end of our plenary this morning. I still have several speakers on my list and so it seems that we will not be able to conclude the discussion this morning. I therefore intend to adjourn our meeting and exhaust the list before me during a plenary meeting in the afternoon.

The meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 12 p.m.*