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# Conference on Disarmament

English

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## Final record of the one thousand five hundred and seventy-second plenary meeting

Held via videoconference on Thursday, 20 May 2021, at 10 a.m. Central European Summer Time

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



**The President:** I call to order the 1572nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before we proceed with the agenda item for today, I would first like to continue with the list of speakers remaining from Tuesday's plenary meeting. Once the list of speakers from Tuesday is exhausted, we will then move on to today's thematic discussion on agenda item 2.

The first speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Germany, Mr. Peter Andreas Beerwerth.

**Mr. Beerwerth** (Germany): I would first like to thank Mr. Wan and Ms. Mackby for their informative presentations on Tuesday. I share the views on this topic expressed by many speakers, including my Spanish, United Kingdom, American and French colleagues. Better nuclear risk reduction is a key component in averting nuclear war. We cannot overestimate the importance of well-functioning risk reduction measures, at both the strategic and at the practical operational levels.

Increased efforts in the realm of risk reduction are also particularly necessary in light of the growing risk areas that were so lucidly outlined by the two presenters. At the forefront of them are cyberspace and outer space. There now exists a broad body of research on both the probability and the consequences of the risks. The humanitarian, economic, environmental and societal consequences of nuclear weapons detonations are better understood than before.

Likewise, there is now greater awareness about concrete aspects of the risk of use of nuclear weapons, whether that use is intentional, accidental, by miscalculation, by misperception or unauthorized. Risk reduction will be an important topic for the upcoming Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, from which we are hoping for specific outcomes on the topic. As a member of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, and in the context of the United States' Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament Initiative, my Government has been actively engaged in the work on nuclear risk reduction and will continue with that engagement.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Germany and I give the floor to the next speaker, the distinguished delegate of South Africa, Mr. Angus September.

**Mr. September** (South Africa): I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all new ambassadors and colleagues. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Iraq on behalf of the Group of 21. We also would like to thank the presenters who covered the two agenda items.

Mr. President, South Africa maintains its view that the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again remains the only possible way of ensuring that they will not be used. That should remain our highest priority. It is for this reason that the topic related to agenda items 1 and 2 of the Conference on Disarmament is so important to South Africa.

South Africa is the first country to have voluntarily dismantled its nuclear weapons programme; it has always maintained that neither the possession nor the pursuit of nuclear weapons can enhance international peace and security and that nuclear disarmament is the best measure to prevent a nuclear war. Indeed, the best starting point would be to build trust by implementing past commitments and political agreements.

Having said that, please allow me to express our disappointment at the failure of the Conference to reach an agreement on a programme of work. This puts the Conference in a very peculiar situation, executing a deliberative mandate instead of the negotiating mandate that was conferred on it 43 years ago pursuant to the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

It must also be recalled that the very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1946 called for the elimination of atomic weapons from national armaments. This would lead to the negotiation, adoption and entry into force of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Preamble to the Treaty emphasizes the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind in nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert that danger.

South Africa continues to view the Non-Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime, which represents a historical border between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States, under the terms of which the former have undertaken to eliminate their nuclear weapons based on a reciprocal undertaking by the latter not to pursue the nuclear weapon option.

Unfortunately, the only progress that has been achieved in the area of nuclear disarmament since 2010 has been the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which fills a key remaining legal gap in international law regarding weapons of mass destruction by establishing a clear-cut prohibition of nuclear weapons in a manner fully supported by and consistent with the existing multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime in terms of the principles and dictates of international humanitarian law, as well as international human rights law. In our view, the commitment by NPT States parties to the prohibition of nuclear weapons is the strongest commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President, as we are all aware, the President-Designate of the tenth Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference is currently engaging in extensive consultations regarding the dates and format for the Review Conference. South Africa therefore calls on all NPT States parties to strengthen the Treaty through the full implementation of all our obligations and commitments agreed to at previous Review Conferences. Since the 2000 Review Conference, we have witnessed an increasing emphasis by some States on the non-proliferation pillar of the Treaty, sometimes even to the exclusion of the other equally important pillars of the Treaty.

While no positive movement has been made in terms of the implementation of obligations under article VI of the Treaty, we have to acknowledge that there have been some reductions in nuclear stockpiles. While reductions are important, they are not a substitute for concrete, transparent, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament measures. Recently, we have even witnessed regressive steps like the announcement of an increase in nuclear stockpiles and ongoing investment in nuclear modernization programmes. All of these go against the spirit of article VI. This makes it clear that some States still wish to indefinitely retain these instruments of destruction, contrary to their legal obligations and political commitments. This undermines the Non-Proliferation Treaty bargain and the norms established under the Treaty.

Mr. President, South Africa participated in the Group of Governmental Experts on nuclear disarmament verification established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 74/50 and it is pleased that the Group's report was adopted by consensus. South Africa will continue to participate constructively in the work of the Group.

In conclusion, my delegation is of the view that measurable progress on nuclear disarmament is a major determinant in achieving and sustaining international peace and security. We believe that it is high time that all Conference members work to ensure that this body discharges its negotiating mandate.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished delegate of South Africa for his statement. And now we will turn to the topic of our thematic discussion today, which is fissile material for weapons.

Distinguished colleagues, as you know, the possibility of reaching agreement on an international regulatory framework dealing with the production of fissile material has been in the focus of the international community for quite some time. In order to better understand what the current state of affairs regarding this issue is and with a view to informing a constructive discussion among the Conference on Disarmament member States, bringing divergent views and positions closer together and outlining a possible way forward towards a possible future agreement related to the production and stockpiling of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices, the presidency has invited three distinguished panellists, who will offer us three different yet mutually and usefully complementing perspectives on the topic of our debate: that of a think tank researcher; that of a former long-time non-proliferation expert and senior staff member of the International Atomic Energy Agency; and that of an insider to and active promoter of the most recent developments regarding the issue of fissile material within this Conference.

The first of our panellists is Ms. Emmanuelle Maitre. She has worked as a research fellow at the Foundation for Strategic Research since July 2014. She is a graduate of the Institut d'étude politique de Paris – Sciences Po. She works on issues of nuclear non-proliferation, deterrence and disarmament. She has also worked as a research assistant at the Center for Arms Control Studies at the Brookings Institution and I now have the pleasure of giving her the floor.

**Ms. Maitre** (Foundation for Strategic Research): Thank you very much for inviting me to this meeting. I will start by giving a very brief description of the state of play in respect of the production of fissile material. I will then invoke the history of the fissile material cut-off treaty before focusing a little bit more on challenges and the way forward.

The main source that we can use for estimates of the evolution of fissile material is the International Panel on Fissile Materials. The estimates are always very hard to come by because we do not have official data on most of the material, except for the few countries that publish data on highly enriched uranium. And as the two main holders of fissile material today are the United States and Russia, what happens in those countries has a big impact on the evolution of fissile material, whether we are talking about domestic stockpile management or the evolution of other stocks.

Three countries are still today thought to be producing highly enriched uranium for military purposes. Four States have a moratorium in place. One State is thought to have the ability to produce more material and, as you know, one State has fully dismantled its military installations. The trend in nuclear-weapon States recognized as such under the Non-Proliferation Treaty is to recycle fissile material. But in some other countries, there is still a perceived need to produce more fissile material for their arsenals.

So, in this context, negotiating a treaty on fissile material appeared to be a logical next step in the 1990s. To some extent, it was seen as a low-hanging fruit in the context of progress in terms of disarmament and, of course, it is something that has been discussed for the past 20 years in multilateral forums.

Looking back over the history of the treaty, there was the unanimous adoption in 1993 of General Assembly resolution 48/75 L calling for the negotiation of a treaty, in which we can already see the key terms in place: “a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices”. Those key terms are still of course, very much at the root of what is agreed today when countries are thinking about what a future treaty could look like.

In 1995, the Conference on Disarmament took up the mandate and, under the leadership of Ambassador Shannon, we saw the adoption of the Shannon mandate establishing a committee to negotiate the treaty. There were some difficulties initially but, in 1998, an ad hoc committee was established to negotiate the treaty. Of course, the problem was the inability to adopt a programme of work within the Conference on Disarmament, which meant that there was no possibility to move forward until 2009.

An important milestone came in 2010 with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, which really linked the NPT review process and the fissile material cut-off treaty as it is understood today, with a clear reference to the treaty and a call to begin negotiations towards it as soon as possible.

Since then, there have been two major events. The first one was the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, which met in 2014 and 2015 to discuss what a treaty could look like and to try to move forward on that issue. The Group's report was important in that it reiterated the key principles of what a treaty could be, so there was a consensual approach on some elements: it should be legally binding, non-discriminatory, multilateral and verifiable. There was also consensus on the fact that a treaty would prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. The Group of Governmental Experts also acted as a forum for defining key terms such as, of course, fissile material.

In 2017 and 2018, we saw the creation of a high-level expert preparatory group, which picked up the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and moved forward with an interesting effort to try to present all possible options for a potential treaty and to try to detail the implication of some of the choices. Its report is the most recent major development regarding the treaty and, of course, this endeavour, like so many others, has suffered as a result of the current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis.

But there are also a number of other challenges currently standing in the way of progress in the negotiations. The first ones are related to procedure, and mostly the fact that the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to move forward on negotiations, which has led to some frustration and some calls to move the negotiations out of the Conference on Disarmament for the sake of efficiency.

But not all members of the international community support that idea. And so there has been a trade-off between the efficiency of the negotiations and participation, as it was recognized quite early on that, if all the nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-possessor States did not participate in the negotiations, the value of the treaty would be quite limited.

On the substance, the most difficult element has been the question of verification. The Shannon mandate was in favour of a verifiable treaty and most States support this, but, at some point in the history of the negotiations, some countries preferred to put forward the idea of non-verifiable treaty as being more realistic. So, the question of how to verify the treaty, who could do it and so on, has been quite problematic.

Another element is the question of stockpiles. Here, the Shannon mandate has been generally interpreted by a majority of States as leaving the possibility of defining the scope of the treaty to the negotiation phase. But it is, of course, the main element that is problematic between negotiating partners.

And finally, the scope of the treaty: here it is generally agreed that we are speaking about material that could be used for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, which mostly means highly enriched uranium and plutonium, but there have been questions about whether or not other materials should be included in the treaty in the future.

So the question is whether, despite those enduring challenges, there is still relevance in discussing a fissile material cut-off treaty today. And it seems that the answer is yes, as we can see from the support expressed by a number of actors in favour of the negotiations.

One element I would like to mention is the support of the European Union, on the grounds of Council Decision 2017/2284, adopted in 2017, which has been very useful in facilitating dialogue in the African, the Asia-Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions to be able to raise the level of knowledge and enable officials and academic experts to grasp the issues better and be able to play a more active role in the negotiations as well.

In the think-tank world, we have seen a lot of work done in the past 20 years in proposing solutions and alternative scenarios in a number of domains.

And finally, there have been many institutes involved: the International Panel on Fissile Materials, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre and the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt. Then there are international organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and also States that have produced proposals for a draft treaty or, for instance, procedures on the question of verification.

At the political level, we have seen some support, very recently, such as the “Stepping Stones for Advancing Nuclear Disarmament” offered by the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, which called on nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-possessor States to unblock negotiations on the Treaty. And, in a working paper for the upcoming NPT Review Conference, the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative has called for the early commencement of fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations. It has also remained a commitment of the five nuclear-weapon States recognized under the Non-Proliferation Treaty: for instance, in the statement made following their 2015 Conference in London, there was a commitment to work on this issue.

So, there is still support for the treaty. There is work ongoing and we can but hope that it will move forward very fast. The fissile material cut-off treaty would, of course, aid the cause of nuclear disarmament by making the general trend in the production of nuclear arsenals irreversible – an important element, especially in the current context. It would formalize the moratorium introduced by some countries on fissile material production and limit the pool of materials available for manufacturing nuclear weapons. As such, it would represent an important step in terms of quantitative disarmament and, to some extent, be complementary to the qualitative disarmament step that was taken with the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Back in the 1990s, those were thought of as the two important tracks in moving forward on disarmament.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Maitre for her presentation and I now give the floor to Ms. Laura Rockwood, who has over 30 years of experience in non-proliferation and international safeguards at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. She is currently the Director of Open Nuclear Network, a programme of One Earth Future.

**Ms. Rockwood** (Open Nuclear Network): Today I would like to share with you some thoughts that I developed when I was invited to participate in the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group that was chaired by Canadian Ambassador Heidi Hulan, back in 2018. Most of the options that I am going to discuss today are drawn from the 2015 report of the Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. I would like to begin by highlighting some of the main points of the recommendations made by the Group of Governmental Experts.

First of all, the legal and institutional arrangements of the treaty will play an important role in ensuring its credibility within the international community – and credibility is key here. The arrangements should be designed to facilitate the treaty's effective implementation, so that it may achieve its intended object and purpose. The institutions must remain credible, politically impartial and technically competent. And it should take into account current and evolving experience of other international treaties and institutions. Here I note that I was still at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) when we first started having conversations with the Conference on Disarmament about the possible role of the Agency in a fissile material cut-off treaty.

There are a number of aspects of governance that would need to be addressed by the drafters of the treaty: for instance, whether there would be a conference of the States parties. Would it be a plenary body with a principal organ comprised of all States parties, overseeing an executive council or the secretariat, meeting at fixed intervals? Would there be an executive council responsible for supervising verification? And what about a secretariat? The Group of Governmental Experts agreed that the treaty should include the establishment of governance and decision-making mechanisms and would also provide for political oversight and treaty-related decision-making, including on issues related to resource allocation, non-compliance and verification.

For the Group of Governmental Experts, the international and effectively verifiable treaty would be one that involves credible multilateral verification. The negotiators would need to determine whether verification responsibilities would be carried out by IAEA or be self-contained within the treaty organization.

One might consider a number of existing examples: for instance, the Non-Proliferation Treaty has no permanent organization, but it has quinquennial Review Conferences. On the other hand, there is the Chemical Weapons Convention and its Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; and there will be the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, if and when it enters into force. Those have permanent implementation bodies, a yearly conference of States parties, an executive council and a permanent secretariat.

So, drawing on the report of the Group of Governmental Experts, I have identified two main options for a governance structure. The first option would be for a stand-alone, fissile material cut-off treaty body with its own verification body secretariat. It would be overseen by its own executive council and a conference of the States parties.

Option 2 would be some kind of hybrid relationship with IAEA, for which I have identified two options: verification by IAEA within IAEA; and a separate fissile material cut-off treaty verification unit within the Agency, but outside its traditional institutional decision-making process, similar to what was done when we created the Iraq Action Team back in the early 1990s.

So, for option 1, we are talking about a stand-alone fissile material cut-off treaty organization. It would create an organization equipped with a verification body and tasked with the powers and functions necessary to permit it to carry out verification. It would be overseen by an executive council, like the example of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which has the verification measures actually included in its operative text, or the Chemical Weapons Convention, which incorporated the verification provisions in the annex to the Convention. Or, it could follow the example of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, whereby the verification procedures would be developed by the fissile material cut-off treaty organization.

The advantages of the latter approach would be that it could avoid potential issues related to the difference between the membership of IAEA and the States parties to the treaty and it would certainly reinforce the treaty's distinct purpose.

On the other hand, there are some drawbacks. There might be membership and mandate concerns. It would certainly be resource-intensive and risk duplicating activities carried out by IAEA, particularly if we keep in mind that all of the States that currently have comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols with IAEA are already de facto subject to verification of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

So, this approach of a stand-alone fissile material cut-off treaty organization could compete for resources – both human and financial – within IAEA. And it might have an impact on the consensus on non-proliferation. This is an interesting point. Would we, in effect, be creating one institution for the nuclear-armed States and a different one for the non-nuclear-weapon States? So, for some experts and proponents of this model, if you were to take this route, there might be merit in ensuring physical proximity between the fissile material cut-off treaty organization and IAEA. This has to do with being able to draw on the experience and technical capacity of the Agency.

We also have to consider IAEA safeguards. Under this model, it would be possible for this independent fissile material cut-off treaty organization to negotiate a cooperation agreement with IAEA. I recall that, when the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization was established in Vienna, there was a high degree of sensitivity about the absence of any transfer of experience between the two organizations. I would hope that would not be the case in this instance.

So, you could have a fissile material cut-off treaty organization that would act as a supplement to the work of IAEA. It would constrain its verification activities to activities additional to those already undertaken in the context of IAEA safeguards agreements. This could be done through a draft cooperation agreement.

The advantage of this solution is that it would certainly maximize the experience and expertise of the fissile material cut-off treaty organization and be in line with the distinct purpose of the treaty. On the other hand, creating a parallel verification structure could create confusion and a potential for overlap in challenges in assessing compliance.

The first of the second options would involve IAEA verification and oversight. Under this model, the Agency would take on a new role, verifying compliance with a fissile material cut-off treaty, including potentially through the creation of a fissile material cut-off treaty unit, either within or outside of the Department of Safeguards.

There would be a choice of creating a fissile material cut-off treaty organization or simply a regular review conference mechanism, such as in the case of the NPT. There would also be the choice of having a treaty-specific executive council within the organization or a separate executive council embedded within IAEA.

The administrative secretariat could be treaty-specific and placed either within or outside of IAEA. This is somewhat similar to the NPT structure, where the Agency is

assigned the task of developing bilateral agreements with the States parties and it is the States parties to the treaty, as opposed to IAEA, that determine compliance on the basis of the bilateral agreement. There is a precedent for this approach, with the Agency taking on additional verification tasks mandated by a treaty. The classic example is the NPT itself, in which the Agency was tasked with developing the safeguards procedures necessary to verify compliance with it.

The advantages of this approach would be that it would certainly maximize and build on IAEA expertise in verification and would be resource-effective. And, as I said, there is a precedent for the Agency taking on additional tasks. On the other hand, there would be implications for the Agency's current functioning, in terms of its statutes, rules, practices, budget and financing for verification activities. We might end up with differences between the IAEA Board of Governors and the fissile material cut-off treaty organization membership, which could cause difficulties. And importantly, the Agency has had limited experience in States with unsafeguarded nuclear facilities. So, regardless of the model adopted, that would be the case in any event.

Let us look then at the second option, which has IAEA verification and oversight by the fissile material cut-off treaty organization. This is very similar to the Iraq Action Team that we established within IAEA in 1991. It would mean the Agency taking on a new role outside of the institutional and decision-making structure of IAEA. How would that work? The IAEA Director General would be assigned the role of establishing a fissile material cut-off treaty verification unit within IAEA, much as the Iraq Action Team was. The Board would request the Director General to consult and inform its members, but they would not form part of the decision-making structure. Decision-making related to the fissile material cut-off treaty would remain under the aegis of the fissile material cut-off treaty organization executive council. This is not dissimilar to the NPT system, whereby IAEA conducts verification but it is only verification of compliance with the safeguards agreement. It is the States parties to the NPT who decide whether there has been non-compliance with the NPT itself.

The advantages of this option are that it would allow treaty-specific decision-making and governance; and the Agency's verification capacity and expertise would be maximized.

However, there are some drawbacks. The Iraq Action Team was created in circumstances that are not entirely translatable to the fissile material cut-off treaty. First of all, it was initiated under Chapter 7 of the mandate of the Security Council, to deal with a specific situation not falling under the standard safeguards rules and techniques. And whereas the Iraq Action Team was intended to be a time-limited activity, there would need to be a permanent solution in the case of the fissile material cut-off treaty.

I would like to turn now to financing. Between 1996 and 2002, IAEA and the Governments of the Russian Federation and the United States engaged in discussions on the trilateral initiative, which was designed to address the technical, legal and financial issues associated with IAEA verifying the release of nuclear weapons material from nuclear weapons to peaceful uses: the kind of verification, how it would be financed and what legal issues were associated with it.

Although it is quite an old document by now, I would suggest it might nevertheless be useful to take a look at IAEA document Gov/INF/1999/9 on financing IAEA verification of nuclear arms control and reduction measures, dated 21 May 1999.

So, we identified two approaches to the financing: voluntary and mandatory financing. But overall, we recommended that key considerations be taken into account and that a decision be taken as to whether effective verification of arms control reduction is in the interest of all States – meaning that all States should share in its financing – or whether the “polluter pays” principle should be applied. The funding mechanism must be predictable and reliable. Voluntary funding might come from States parties, non-governmental organizations and philanthropists; its advantage is that it is flexible, but it is not necessarily predictable or reliable. We looked at two different approaches to mandatory funding: one could be based on some sort of regular budget scale of assessment, using the formula for assessed contributions to safeguards costs, for example, or a different formula, balancing zero real growth with other considerations.



But there is another alternative for a mandatory type of funding, of which we have two examples: the 1973 peacekeeping formula, which took into account the relative capacities of the economically developed and the economically less developed countries to contribute, balanced with the special responsibilities of the permanent members of the Security Council.

The other example is the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference formula, whereby costs are apportioned between the nuclear-weapon States, whose share is 55 per cent, with the remaining 45 per cent divided among the other participating States parties, using the United Nations scale of assessment.

I hope that it has been useful to have a brief summary of what the various options might involve with respect to decision-making organs, the verification body and the administration of the secretariat. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and comments on this.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Rockwood for her presentation and I would note that, as well as shedding light on an important aspect of the topic of our discussion today, her presentation is also very relevant to the topic of nuclear disarmament verification, which we discussed last week under agenda item 1.

I would like now to continue with our next presenter for today, Ambassador Robbert Gabriëlse, who is the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Conference. His professional experience and commitment to the objectives and purposes of the Conference on Disarmament are well recognized and respected. Ambassador Gabriëlse is therefore well placed to share his views on the work of the Conference on Disarmament aimed at reaching a consensus towards possible agreement with regard to the production and stockpiling of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices.

**Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands):** I am pleased to present the work conducted in 2018 by subsidiary body 2, which I had the honour of chairing. Allow me, by way of introduction, to briefly outline the subsidiary bodies and their structure, agreed at the start of the 2018 session, and how that allowed the Conference on Disarmament to organize its work in an efficient manner, with delegations able to prepare well in advance and the participation of experts from the capitals.

At the start of the 2018 session, the Conference on Disarmament adopted the decision contained in document CD/2119, pursuant to which five subsidiary bodies were established: one for each of agenda items 1 to 4 and a fifth for agenda items 5, 6 and 7. Subsequently, in accordance with the decision contained in document CD/2126, the five coordinators for the subsidiary bodies were appointed and the timetable for their meetings was agreed.

In accordance with the timetable, it was agreed that the general focus of subsidiary body 2 would be on a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. That was the compromise. An understanding was also reached that, of the five meetings of subsidiary body 2, at least one would be devoted to matters other than the ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices that fall in the purview of agenda item 2, on the prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters.

In line with the mandate of the subsidiary bodies, a report on the progress achieved and agreed upon in each subsidiary body was submitted by the coordinator to the Conference on Disarmament, through the President, for adoption and due reflection in the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament. The report of subsidiary body 2 is contained in document CD/2139, as adopted at the 1417th plenary meeting of the Conference on 5 September 2018.

The work of subsidiary body 2 benefited from the participation of two experts: Mr. Pavel Podvig of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, who presented an overview of activities conducted with a general focus on a ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosives. He was present to provide expertise at the different meetings we held. Mr. Sico van der Meer of the Clingendael Institute gave a presentation on “Reducing nuclear weapons risk: 11 policy options” at the meeting on 29 June.

Allow me to stress here that the discussions were mostly of a technical nature and focused on the substance of the matter rather than political issues. Delegations also drew on different studies and working papers on the issues at hand, as well as the reports of the Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices and the work of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group. The latter concluded its report in mid-2018 and some of the experts participated actively in the work of subsidiary body 2.

Turning to the substance of the work conducted by the subsidiary body, I would like to mention the following subjects: first, the ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices; second, other matters under agenda item 2 on the prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters – the focus here was on nuclear risk reduction; and third, possible areas of further work.

On the issue of the ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear exposed devices, discussions were held on definitions, scope, verification and institutional arrangements. General comments were also made and one meeting was devoted to discussing effective measures, including the role and usefulness of transparency and confidence-building measures.

Two meetings were devoted to the scope of verification. As noted in the report, there were deeply divergent views on the issue. Nonetheless, some commonalities of a general nature were agreed on or reaffirmed: for instance, that the future treaty should be non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable; and that it should contribute in practical terms to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament objectives, bearing in mind paragraph 50 (b) of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and lead to undiminished security for all States, with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower level of military holdings, taking into account the need of all States to protect their security.

Some commonalities with regard to definitions and institutional arrangements were agreed or reaffirmed in the report, although diverging views were also expressed on those issues. One of the issues where the views were very divergent was the scope of a future treaty. We noted that some delegations insisted that the treaty should focus only on banning the future production of fissile material. Reference was made to the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein in that regard. As that mandate remains the most relevant and valid basis for conducting negotiations on such a treaty in the Conference, those delegations argued that there was no need for a new mandate.

Other delegations were more flexible on the matter, saying that a treaty banning future production was a minimum. Those delegations focused on the distinction with regard to the different categories of existing stocks of fissile materials and argued that some of those categories could be included. According to these delegations, the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein left sufficient constructive ambiguity as to whether stocks were included in the scope or not.

Still other delegations insisted that the scope of the treaty should include future, as well as past, production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. For some of them, the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein remains the basis for negotiations, as it did not exclude existing stocks, while one delegation also expressed the view that the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein had outlived its utility and validity as the basis for substantive work on the issue.

Discussions took place on the functional categorization of fissile materials, non-diversion, international transfers, acquisition and the treaty's contribution to the objectives of non-proliferation and disarmament.

Another issue that merited in-depth discussion because of its technical complexities was verification. The different approaches to verification – a focused approach, a comprehensive approach and a hybrid approach – were discussed. Delegations discussed which States should be the focus of verification requirements, as many States already have safeguarded facilities as a result of their existing legal obligations, in particular under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Addressing States' concerns regarding sensitive information in the context of verification was also discussed, as were the type of inspections, the verification toolbox and the body which should be tasked with verification. The question of what further technical and scientific work remains to be done in this field was also considered. On the issue of reducing nuclear weapons risks, the delegations discussed a number of policy options and elaborated on their national positions.

Issues such as nuclear deterrence – whether it is obsolete or not – the importance or otherwise of strategic stability or balance, and whether risk reduction measures should be placed on a multilateral footing were discussed.

The value of conducting further work was emphasized, and delegations made a number of suggestions for its focus, such as the technical and scientific aspects, scope, definitions, verification and legal and institutional arrangements or transparency and confidence-building measures. They also agreed that further discussion on nuclear risk reduction, as took place in the Conference last year, would be welcome.

In closing, Mr. President allow me to pose two questions for our discussion today and to reflect on the way forward for the Conference on Disarmament. The first one is whether the work of the subsidiary bodies can serve as a basis for further substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament. And secondly, how can the Conference on Disarmament make sense of all the technical work that has been conducted in the past on the subject both inside and outside the Conference on Disarmament?

**The President:** I thank Mr. Gabriëls for his presentation, for keeping alive the institutional memory of this Conference and also for his suggested guidelines for our discussion today.

Now I turn to the list of speakers who have requested the floor and the first to speak will be distinguished delegate of Iraq, on behalf of the Group of 21, Mr. Obay Al-Taii.

**Mr. Al-Taii (Iraq):** Mr. President, I have the honour to deliver the statement of the Group of 21 on follow-up to the 2013 High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament.

The strong support of the international community for taking urgent and effective measures to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons was amply demonstrated at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament, held on 26 September 2013, when Heads of State and Government, foreign ministers and other high-level or senior government officials expressed their unambiguous position and policies on nuclear disarmament in response to the decision adopted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/39.

Subsequent to that meeting, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 68/32, 69/58, 70/34, 71/71, 72/251, 73/40, 74/54 and 75/45, all entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament". The resolutions called for the urgent commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for the early conclusion of 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 resolutions also requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States with regard to achieving the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in particular on the elements of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, and to submit a report thereon to the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament.

The General Assembly also decided to convene in New York, on a date to be decided later, a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament to review the progress made in this regard.

The Group stresses the importance of the commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, which falls on 26 September. In this regard, the Group expresses its appreciation to Member States, the United Nations system and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, academia, parliamentarians, the mass media and individuals that have worked to promote this International Day through all forms

of educational and public awareness-raising activities about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the need for their total elimination in order to mobilize international efforts towards achieving the common goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The Group invites all stakeholders to continue to promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

The Group welcomes the formal proclamation 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 on 28 and 29 January 2014. The 33 member countries of CELAC pledged to further nuclear disarmament as a priority goal and to contribute to progress towards general and complete disarmament in order to promote the strengthening of trust among nations.

CELAC once again reiterated its standing commitment to continue working for Latin America and the Caribbean region to remain and be strengthened as a zone of peace, thereby contributing to regional and international security. The persistent existence of nuclear weapons poses a grave threat to humanity and all life on Earth and the only defence against the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a new nuclear detonation is the total, irreversible and legally binding elimination of nuclear weapons and the maintenance of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Nuclear disarmament is the highest priority of the Conference on Disarmament. The Group reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or the threat of their use. The fulfilment of different disarmament obligations and commitments will mutually reinforce non-proliferation. Nuclear disarmament has to be pursued in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner.

The Group of 21 is mindful of the solemn obligations of States parties undertaken pursuant to article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, particularly to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and calls for urgent compliance with the legal obligation of the fulfilment of commitments undertaken in this field.

We acknowledge the significant contribution made by a number of countries towards realizing the objective of nuclear disarmament through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as by voluntary renunciation of nuclear weapons programmes or withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from their territories, and strongly support the speedy establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We are deeply concerned by the persistent reluctance of nuclear-weapon States to approach their treaty obligations as an urgent commitment to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons by providing pretexts that are unacceptable, due to the urgency of taking concrete action to avert the adverse consequences of nuclear weapons. In this connection, we recall the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice in its 1996 advisory opinion that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

It is the firm belief of the Group that the time has come to put words into action. Accordingly, the Group of 21 takes this opportunity to call for the implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolutions 68/32, 69/58, 70/34, 71/71, 72/251, 73/40, 74/54 and 75/45.

In this connection, the Group of 21 calls for the urgent commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, 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 over 86 States had signed the Treaty and 52 States had ratified or acceded to it as at 22 January 2021. In this regard, the members of the Group of 21 that are States 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.

We therefore request you, Mr. President, to take into account in your ongoing consultations how to take further forward the mandate given to the Conference on Disarmament by the General Assembly on this important issue and call upon members of the Conference to support this important initiative.

**The President:** I thank the distinguished representative of Iraq and now I give the floor to the next speaker, Ms. Markéta Homolková, distinguished delegate for Portugal, on behalf of the European Union.

**Ms. Homolková (Portugal):** I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the stabilization and association process and potential candidate, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Since this is the first time that we have spoken under the Bulgarian presidency, let us start by thanking you for all your efforts to restart thematic debate by prerogative of the presidency after the failure to adopt a programme of work or a decision on the establishment of subsidiary bodies at the beginning of the year. It is indeed concerning to see a persistent lack of political will to bring the Conference on Disarmament back on a substantive track. Today's topic is of utmost importance for us and I would like to thank all the presenters for their very informative presentations at the beginning of this debate.

The European Union and its member States reiterate their long-standing support for an immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices and we support starting such negotiations in accordance with the decision contained in document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein.

To demonstrate our continued commitment, the European Union has become a supporter of action 7 of the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament: "conclude a treaty banning fissile materials for nuclear weapons". Starting such negotiations is not only a European Union priority, but the overwhelming will of the international community, as manifested in the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan and reiterated in United Nations General Assembly resolution 73/65, which reaffirmed the urgent necessity of negotiating and bringing to a conclusion a non-discriminatory, multilateral and international and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

In this regard, we fully support the consensus recommendation of the high-level expert preparatory group including the recommendation that "the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices begin without delay in the Conference on Disarmament and on the basis of CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein".

We are convinced that the start of fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations will not threaten anyone's national security interest. Any State which has reservations about aspects of a future treaty can raise them during negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, which operates according to the consensus rule. We are concerned at the situation in the Conference on Disarmament this year, particularly the difficulty experienced in attempting to find consensus language in the negotiations on the establishment of subsidiary body 2. Once again, we call on all Conference on Disarmament members to exercise their utmost flexibility and to start negotiations on such a treaty without delay.

In the meantime, we call on those nuclear-weapon States which have not yet done so and all other States possessing nuclear weapons to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on their production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

The Conference is well equipped to start the negotiations immediately. We welcome the substantial progress made on possible definitions, scope, verification and legal and institutional arrangements and the comprehensive preparatory work carried out in the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group and the Group of Governmental

Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The options-based approach allowed for in-depth consideration of every possible alternative, increasing understanding of the challenges at stake and providing a clearer picture to future negotiators on realistic options. The options for a treaty's preambular elements may include reference to, inter alia, the importance of active and equal participation and leadership of women and their full involvement in the institutions of the treaty and in related efforts to maintain and promote peace and security. We also welcome the identification of substantial transparency and confidence-building measures.

We recall that the annual General Assembly resolution on a fissile material cut-off treaty, co-sponsored by Canada, Germany and the Netherlands continues to receive overwhelming majority support. Last year, 184 States voted in favour of resolution 73/65, 4 abstained, and only 1 was against. In it, the General Assembly urged Member States to give due consideration to the report of the high-level expert preparatory group, including further consideration of confidence-building measures and called on the Conference on Disarmament to fully examine the report and consider further action.

Positive momentum has already been created in the Conference on Disarmament under the leadership of Germany, facilitating the discussions on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the working group on the way ahead, among others, and the Netherlands, who coordinated the work in subsidiary body 2 in 2018. The in-depth technical discussions in subsidiary body 2 and its consensual report showed converging views on several issues and signalled that there was a collective will to look for commonalities. We should further build on this work in order to start negotiations.

In this respect, we agree with the recommendation of the high-level group that further expert work could be useful, in particular on the various verification models to determine how they might work in practice and the resource implications of the possible verification and institutional models.

Mr. President, in view of the rescheduled 2020 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, it is of utmost importance that the Conference on Disarmament move swiftly towards negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We remain convinced that such a treaty would represent a concrete step towards nuclear disarmament and would make a significant practical contribution to both non-proliferation and disarmament objectives. Such a treaty is also urgently needed to encourage further progress on other arms control disarmament and non-proliferation issues. At a time when there is a real prospect of weapon numbers increasing, the case for a fissile material cut-off treaty becomes ever clearer and more urgent.

In order to sustain the momentum, the European Union provided financial support to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to facilitate the participation of African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean countries in consultations related to such a treaty and other activities. The main objectives of the project were to promote dialogue at regional level, to enhance knowledge and understanding on the substance and process of negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty and to broaden and strengthen the participation of all States in future negotiations.

A series of regional workshops have taken place in countries of the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, South and East Africa, and Central and West Africa, in addition to expert meetings and country visits.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Homolková for her statement and also for her kind words in respect of the Bulgarian presidency. I now give the floor to our next speaker, the Ambassador Wood of the United States of America.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Mr. President, thank you for convening this session on one of the most important issues that the Conference on Disarmament was created to address. I would also like to thank our panellists for their very substantive presentations.

Mr. President, the United States position on a fissile material cut-off treaty is well known and has not changed. We continue to support the immediate commencement of

negotiations towards a treaty on the basis of consensus and with the participation of all key States.

These are the very conditions that the Conference on Disarmament was established to satisfy. The United States realizes that reaching consensus on a fissile material cut-off treaty may be difficult. But that is not a reason not to begin negotiations. For example, while the United States remains opposed to including existing stockpiles of fissile material, we understand that others have different views. We also accept that stockpiles will be debated, regardless of the wording of the negotiating mandate.

Therefore, we are open to new and creative proposals for a negotiating mandate, as long as that mandate does not prejudge the outcome by explicitly mandating the inclusion of existing stocks.

Moving forward, we must remind ourselves that the principal purpose of a fissile material cut-off treaty is to prohibit the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons in order to cap current stockpiles. Achieving this outcome alone would be an essential step forward in global non-proliferation efforts. It would also help to prevent a future nuclear arms race, thereby making the security environment more conducive to even further steps on nuclear disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament is the best place for such negotiations to happen. We have the negotiating mandate. We are governed by consensus. And the key States are already in the room. The fact that the Conference on Disarmament has failed to start negotiations is not for want of trying.

A number of countries, including the United States, have suggested solutions for breaking the two-decade-long stalemate. Conference on Disarmament Presidents have proposed draft programmes of work that included negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. The United Nations General Assembly established a Group of Governmental Experts and then a second preparatory group of experts to lay the groundwork for negotiations. And, finally, in 2018, in subsidiary body 2, we discussed a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The fact is that our lack of progress on a treaty reflects major differences on one key point. A select few countries continue to want to increase their stocks of fissile material for nuclear weapons – or at least maintain the option to do so – even as they express conditional support for negotiations. Recognizing this reality, Mr. President, the United States reiterates our call for all States that have not yet done so to declare a moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Such a moratorium is one of the essential steps towards a fissile material cut-off treaty, and nuclear disarmament more generally. It is a concrete demonstration of commitment to a treaty and would be an immensely meaningful confidence-building measure for nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States alike. A moratorium is also one example of an “effective measure” to create an environment that is conducive to future nuclear disarmament, as outlined in article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Some have argued that a moratorium would reduce incentives for negotiating a treaty. The reality is that their refusal to cap their own stockpiles has led to the current impasse. For our part, the United States remains committed to maintaining our moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, which has been in effect since the early 1990s.

The United Kingdom, France and Russia have similar moratoriums in place. We call on China to join us and make this a P5 commitment. I also note that significant progress has already been made in addressing existing stocks.

In the mid-1990s, the United States started removing 374 metric tons of highly enriched uranium and 61.5 metric tons of plutonium from use in nuclear weapons. In addition, we have down-blended more than 164 metric tons of highly enriched and low-enriched uranium for civilian use. These are but a few of the tangible steps the United States has already taken to reduce the amount of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. None of that progress would have been possible if we had insisted on linking such steps to a negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Mr. President, I have made all of these points before. Many of us have. I am in my seventh year representing the United States at the Conference on Disarmament – so I say with confidence that, despite the fact that this is the one topic that the majority of Conference on Disarmament member States believe is most ready for negotiation, we are getting further and further away from that goal.

Not only are we barred from negotiating a critical component of the global non-proliferation and disarmament agenda, but this year we could not even agree to an oblique reference to a fissile material cut-off treaty in a decision to convene subsidiary bodies. This is not a sustainable way to do business.

If we cannot even mention a treaty, we will certainly never negotiate one. And – in light of this situation – the idea that we could somehow negotiate multiple treaties covering all our agenda items at once is simply not practical.

Mr. President, ending the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons has a tangible impact on the broader international security environment. Our inability even to talk about a fissile material cut-off treaty after more than two decades in limbo is a sign of how that environment has regrettably deteriorated.

A modest step in reversing that deterioration – and setting the stage for successful negotiations on a treaty – would be the voluntary moratoriums on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons that I spoke about earlier. To that end, I reiterate our call to all those who have not declared and maintained such a moratorium to take that step now.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Wood for his statement. I now give the floor to our next speaker on the list, Ambassador Ogasawara of Japan.

**Mr. Ogasawara (Japan):** Mr. President, Japan would like to express its sincere gratitude to you for holding a thematic debate under agenda item 2: prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters. I also greatly appreciate the excellent presentations made by the three presenters at the beginning of today's meeting.

Today I would like to share Japan's position on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Mr. President, every year since 1994, Japan has submitted draft resolutions on the elimination of nuclear weapons to the First Committee of the General Assembly. These resolutions have been based upon a realistic and pragmatic approach aimed at realizing a world without nuclear weapons.

Among the realistic and practical disarmament measures which the international community should aim for at this juncture, Japan attaches particular importance to two of them, namely the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and an early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The former is key to a qualitative capping of nuclear weapons development through a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing and the latter is key to a quantitative capping, to be accomplished by a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. As such, Japan continues to strongly advocate the early commencement of negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty within the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, as stated in its working paper, document CD/1774, submitted to the Conference on Disarmament in 2006, as well as its 2013 views on a fissile material cut-off treaty pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/53, Japan is of the view that the core purpose of a fissile material cut-off treaty is to stop any increase in the amount of fissile material available to any State party for nuclear weapons, beginning from the entry into force of the treaty. Any activity that increases the amount of fissile material for nuclear weapons should be treated as being effectively synonymous with production.

Therefore, the core obligations under such a treaty must include not only the obligation to prohibit production of fissile material and nuclear weapons but also, *inter alia*, the obligation to close down or to dismantle any production facilities for fissile material for nuclear weapons or to convert them to civilian purposes.



Japan is of the view that verification in the context of the treaty should confirm – but not be limited to confirming – that production of fissile material is not taking place. Other obligations that could fall under the treaty should also be verified to the extent possible.

As to how to deal with existing stockpiles of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, one of the most controversial issues of a possible fissile material cut-off treaty, Japan is of the view that this issue should be resolved during negotiations. The inclusion of existing stockpiles within the scope of a fissile material cut-off treaty should not be a condition for recommencing negotiations.

Mr. President, many countries, including Japan, have expressed their respective positions on a fissile material cut-off treaty and have engaged in discussions within the Conference on Disarmament over time. While negotiations on a treaty have not started, many valuable documents have been adopted in the past several years, including the 2015 report of the Group of Governmental Experts (A/70/81), the 2018 report of the high-level expert preparatory group (A/73/159) and the 2018 report on the work of subsidiary body 2 to the Conference on Disarmament (CD/2139).

Japan highly values these important works, which present substantive elements of and material for a possible treaty, and considers that they provide a solid foothold for future negotiations.

Based on these points, Japan believes that a fissile material cut-off treaty is the most mature topic ready for negotiations. I would like to recall that the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty was also agreed on by States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, in decision 2, operational paragraph 4 (NPT/CONF.1995/32, Annex); at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, in step 3 of the 13 practical steps (NPT/CONF.2000/28); and at the 2010 NPT Review Conference in action 15 of the action plan (NPT/CONF.2010/50).

The resolutions on the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted by Japan to the United Nations General Assembly that have been adopted by an overwhelming majority of the Member States every year also emphasize the importance of the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Japan calls upon all nuclear-weapon States and States possessing nuclear weapons to declare or maintain a moratorium on the production of fissile material for the use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices until a fissile material cut-off treaty comes into being. In this regard, I highly appreciate the reconfirmation of this moratorium given by Ambassador Wood of the United States of America in his intervention earlier.

Mr. President, the preparations for the commencement of negotiations have been partly addressed; the only remaining factor is that of political will. In view of repeated commitments to this goal, I would like to call again on all member States to exert political will so that we may commence negotiations on this matter within the Conference on Disarmament as soon as possible.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement. Now, I give the floor to our next speaker, Ambassador Norton of Canada.

**Ms. Norton (Canada):** Mr. President, I would like to begin by thanking all of the panellists for their interesting presentations.

As Canadian Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, it is not only my honour, but also my duty to discuss with you how to make concrete progress on a fissile material treaty. No other initiative in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation context is as widely supported by the international community and yet we are still lacking the necessary political will to move forward.

Canada recognizes the essential contributions of all States that have pushed to make this treaty a reality, from the agreement among Conference on Disarmament member States to establish the Shannon mandate in 1995, to the 2014–2015 Group of Governmental Experts and the 2017–2018 high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group, which included two informal consultative meetings open to all United Nations Member States. Exchanges on this treaty throughout the years have been rich and constructive. Particular

thanks go to Germany and the Netherlands for co-leading with Canada on the General Assembly resolution on a fissile material cut-off treaty over the years.

The near universal support for the resolution speaks for itself. No other multilateral nuclear treaty is as ripe for negotiation at this time. The key question is: how do we now translate support into concrete negotiations? We know that many of the core issues with respect to the treaty will only be settled at the negotiation table.

This is why we should all work towards launching negotiations instead of trying to resolve all issues in advance. Let me be clear that Canada is aiming for credible negotiations that could lead to outcomes that will have real-world impact. This means that the negotiations must involve States possessing or producing fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. To get to that starting line, it is critical to reaffirm our commitment to the immediate commencement of negotiations and to commit to a concrete plan for moving forward on these negotiations.

For many of the countries here today, the tenth Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference will offer a unique opportunity to express this commitment. I urge States parties to the Treaty around this table to provide instructions to your respective Review Conference delegations to support strong language on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Review Conference outcomes document that at the very least: (1) acknowledges the body of work achieved over the past decade in support of a fissile material cut-off treaty; (2) acknowledges the role that negotiations on such a treaty could play in building trust and confidence and in addressing the security and political concerns of all participating States; (3) recommends that further work be undertaken on verification measures and other technical aspects of such a treaty, either in parallel with or in advance of, negotiations; (4) acknowledges that no credible substantive steps remain, short of starting negotiations on a treaty; and finally, (5) calls for such negotiations to begin in the Conference on Disarmament as soon as possible.

*(spoke in French)*

Specific examples of the text that we should adopt during the Review Conference with regard to a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices can be found in the document entitled "Landing Zone", produced by the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. I would be happy to pass it on to interested States. I would also like to seek the support of all States for the resolution on a fissile material cut-off treaty which we will present to the First Committee of the General Assembly. We hope that this year, once again, the resolution will receive almost universal support from Member States.

I would now like to address the five nuclear-weapon States. You have been saying for several years, in one way or another, that you are ready to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty and that expert discussions on this subject are taking place. We ask you to show leadership by proposing a way forward to begin negotiations on a treaty that enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of States. It is time to translate words into deeds. To all States that possess nuclear weapons, I encourage you to see the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty as a unique opportunity to discuss security issues, establish new communication channels and strengthen mutual trust. For your concerns to be addressed, you must voice them strongly at the negotiating table. Your interests are not served by continuing to block the start of these negotiations. We must work together to launch these negotiations. It is in all our interests.

**The President** *(spoke in French)*: I thank Ambassador Norton, and now I give the floor to the representative of Argentina, Ms. Porta.

**Ms. Porta** (Argentina) *(spoke in Spanish)*: I would like to begin by thanking Ambassador Robbert Gabriëlse, Ms. Emmanuelle Maitre and Ms. Laura Rockwood for their excellent presentations, which will undoubtedly help to promote substantive exchanges in this series of thematic debates organized by the President.

My delegation regrets, once again, that this debate could not take place in a subsidiary body of the Conference on Disarmament and, what is more, that the Conference has been unable to adopt a programme of work that would have allowed us to begin negotiations towards a legally binding instrument on matters relating to the prevention of nuclear war and,

specifically, on the prohibition of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

It was in that spirit that Argentina joined the Group of Governmental Experts which completed its work in 2015, whose objective was to identify the technical and political elements for the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, by identifying those technical and political elements, providing a better understanding of the differences and laying better foundations for consensus-building in preparation for future negotiations on the instrument. However, the Group represents another example of the progress made in other forums with regard to matters on the Conference's own agenda, demonstrating its ongoing paralysis.

Nevertheless, thanks to the excellent work undertaken by the Group of Governmental Experts, in addition to that of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group which met in 2017 and 2018 and in which my country also participated, my delegation believes that we are in a position to begin negotiations on this future instrument in the Conference and we would like to stress in that regard that, in the opinion of my delegation, such a treaty should constitute a real step towards progress in the area of nuclear disarmament, prioritizing the reduction of stocks of fissile material.

**The President:** I propose that now we adjourn our meeting; we will hear the remaining speakers I have on my list during the afternoon plenary meeting. The meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at noon.*