

Conference on Disarmament

English

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President: Mr. Salomon Eheth(Cameroon)

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The President: Distinguished colleagues, I call to order the 1581st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Before we proceed with the order of business for today, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Stuart Harold Comberbach, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. On behalf of my Government, my fellow Presidents of this session and the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of our full cooperation and support in your new assignment.

Distinguished colleagues, before I officially introduce Minister Wang Yi, allow me, on behalf of my country and my fellow Presidents, to extend my deepest appreciation to China for bringing this pertinent and relevant initiative to this high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament. While exhorting other member States to implement this initiative to strengthen the work of the Conference, I wish to point out that it is fully consistent with the major goals of the United Nations, as stipulated in Article I of the Charter of the United Nations, on maintaining peace and international security.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Wang Yi (China) (*in a pre-recorded video statement, spoke in Chinese*): The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva carries the common aspiration of humankind to beat swords into ploughshares and to develop peacefully. It has played an important role in the historical process of international arms control and disarmament, and made historic contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security. On this occasion, at a time of unprecedented global change and a once-in-a-century epidemic, the Conference should face the profound and complex changes in the current global security landscape directly and clearly convey its firm commitment to maintaining global strategic stability, advancing the international arms control process and defending multilateralism.

Mr. President, at the World Economic Forum “Davos Agenda” dialogue in January this year, Chinese President Xi Jinping took a clear and stirring stand for “letting the torch of multilateralism light the way forward for humanity”. Multilateralism is the right path for the world, and all countries should steadfastly stay on this path, pursuing a new concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and working to advance the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes.

We need to strengthen cooperation for mutual benefit, promote peace and security through cooperation, stand firm against cold war mentality and zero-sum games, and work to achieve security for all.

We need to uphold fairness and justice, strengthen the authority and effectiveness of the multilateral disarmament machinery with the United Nations at its core, reject exceptionalism and double standards, and work to achieve universal security.

We need to take a comprehensive approach to governance, addressing current outstanding security challenges, while at the same time adopting comprehensive policies to eliminate potential security threats and working towards achieving lasting security.

Mr. President, this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the restoration of the lawful seat of the People’s Republic of China at the United Nations. Over the past five decades, China has participated fully in the affairs of the United Nations and made important contributions to global peace and development. The wisdom of Chinese history, accumulated over thousands of years, is that a country seeking hegemony is bound to fail, and not that a growing Power should seek hegemony. China is firmly committed to the path of peaceful development, adheres to an independent foreign policy of peace, and unswervingly pursues a national defence policy that is defensive in nature. China has the most stable, consistent and predictable nuclear policy among all nuclear-weapon States. Since the first day it possessed nuclear weapons, China has unequivocally advocated the eventual complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide, and has unequivocally pledged not to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances. China has long pursued an unconditional policy of not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. It never evades its international disarmament and arms control obligations and has always maintained its

nuclear strength at the minimum level required for its national security. China has never competed with any other country with respect to the scale or numbers of its nuclear forces.

Continuously promoting the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes is an important means of maintaining world peace and security, and is also a concrete manifestation of adherence to and promotion of multilateralism. As for how to advance these processes, China proposes the following approaches:

First, jointly safeguard global strategic stability.

Nuclear disarmament should always be guided by the principles of fairness, reasonableness, and gradual and balanced reduction. The two largest nuclear-weapon States should further significantly reduce their respective nuclear arsenals in a verifiable, irreversible and legally binding manner, thereby creating the conditions for a multilateral nuclear disarmament process.

The five permanent members of the Security Council should jointly affirm the essential principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought. They should strengthen cooperation in reducing strategic risks, and should deepen strategic dialogue so as to enhance strategic trust on a broader range of strategic security issues.

It has been more than 20 years since China proposed that the five nuclear-weapon States should conclude a treaty eschewing first use of nuclear weapons and itself put forward a draft of such a treaty, and we will continue to persevere with and promote this initiative. The Conference on Disarmament should immediately start negotiations on an international legal instrument on negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States, and register substantive progress as soon as possible.

China opposes the development and deployment by individual countries of regional and global anti-missile systems that affect strategic stability and the deployment of land-based medium-range missiles in the neighbourhoods of other countries.

Second, comply with international arms control treaties.

The regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is of unique and distinctive significance. States parties to the Treaty should balance the three major objectives of the Treaty, namely nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and revitalize it in this new historical era so as to expand its role in maintaining world peace and security and serving global sustainable development.

All parties should support the development and operation of the verification regime of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and should continue to work towards the early entry into force of the Treaty. All nuclear-weapon States should abide by their commitment to a moratorium on nuclear testing. The Conference should continue to prepare for negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, and make substantive efforts to ensure that such a treaty achieves the dual objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

China calls on the countries concerned to conscientiously fulfil their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and to complete the destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles and abandoned chemical weapons as soon as possible. China stands ready to take its accession to the Arms Trade Treaty as an opportunity to participate more deeply in international efforts to prevent the illicit transfer of conventional weapons and to support the Silencing the Guns initiative proposed by the African countries.

Third, resolve non-proliferation issues through negotiation.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear issue is an important multilateral diplomatic achievement endorsed by the Security Council in its resolutions, and is a key pillar of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and of peace and stability in the Middle East. The unilateral bullying behaviour of the United States is the root cause of the Iranian nuclear issue, and lifting the sanctions on Iran first is the correct procedure for returning to the Agreement. Given that the negotiations between the United States and Iran on resuming compliance have entered the final stages, the parties should make a political decision as soon as possible and step up diplomatic efforts to put the Agreement back on

track. China advocates the establishment of a multilateral platform for dialogue on security in the Gulf region and the gradual building of a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security architecture in the Middle East. China supports the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and stands ready to work actively towards that end.

Regardless of changes in regional and international circumstances, China has always insisted that peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula must be maintained and that the issue must be resolved through dialogue and consultation. It advocates the pursuit of the twin goals of complete denuclearization of the Peninsula and the establishment of a permanent peace mechanism thereon in accordance with a “dual-track” approach and with the principle of phased actions taken simultaneously. China stands ready to continue working unrelentingly with all parties to advance the political settlement process and to achieve long-term peace and stability on the Peninsula.

Fourth, improve global security governance in emerging areas.

The urgency of preventing the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space is growing. China calls for the early launch of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space, and welcomes constructive views from all parties on the draft treaty jointly proposed by China and Russia.

An open, cooperative, peaceful and secure cyberspace is of great importance to every country and to the world as a whole. The Global Initiative on Data Security proposed by China aims to focus on the common concerns of all parties and proposes constructive solutions for maintaining global data security and cybersecurity. Not long ago, China and the League of Arab States issued the China- League of Arab States Cooperation Initiative on Data Security, embodying the common desire of both sides to safeguard cybersecurity and data security. China stands ready to use the Initiative as a basis to work with all parties to build global rules of digital governance.

The widespread application of artificial intelligence in the military has raised many security, legal, humane and ethical concerns. China is willing to work with all parties to explore a global solution to the issue of lethal autonomous weapon systems.

Emerging technologies are double-edged swords. We need to prevent their weaponization to the greatest extent possible, while avoiding impediments to their peaceful use and to international cooperation, and in particular opposing the blockading of science and technology by individual countries in the name of national security. The United Nations should play a central role in this regard. China is planning to submit a draft resolution to the General Assembly this year to promote an inclusive, transparent and equitable international process at the United Nations to address the relationship between non-proliferation and peaceful uses in a more balanced manner.

The novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak highlights the new challenges facing global biosecurity governance, and countries should work together to build security barriers through closer international cooperation. China supports the establishment of a verification mechanism under the Biological Weapons Convention, and urges the United States to abandon its position as the sole opponent of negotiating a verification protocol to the Convention. China has always advocated responsible bioscience research. Chinese and foreign scientists recently reached agreement on the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists. We encourage all stakeholders to adopt them on a voluntary basis and to jointly promote the relevant international discussion process. China supports the initiative of President Tokayev of Kazakhstan to establish an international biosafety agency, and also supports the Russian initiative on an international convention on the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism.

Mr. President, the United Nations shoulders the important mission of safeguarding international peace and security. China highly commends Secretary-General Guterres on his Agenda for Disarmament and will continue to promote its implementation.

As the sole global multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament should keep pace with the times and strive to be innovative. Member States should strengthen coordination, fully address each other's legitimate concerns, formulate a

comprehensive and balanced programme of work as soon as possible and commence substantive work at an early date. As a responsible member of the Conference family, China stands ready to work unswervingly with all parties to advance the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation process and make new contributions to building a world of lasting peace and universal security.

The President: I thank the State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China for his statement. I now open the floor to any delegation that wishes to speak. The first speaker on my list is the representative of Belarus. I give the floor to Ambassador Yury Ambrazevich.

Mr. Ambrazevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, on behalf of the Republic of Belarus I should like to thank the distinguished delegation of the People's Republic of China for having brought a fresh note to the work of this session of the Conference on Disarmament and for the inspiring statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Mr. Wang Yi.

I would like to note that the approaches he has set out are in line with the position of the Republic of Belarus on disarmament and international security issues. Our views were presented in detail by Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei during the high-level segment of the Conference in February of this year.

Like our esteemed Chinese partners, Belarus is convinced of the value of a multilateral approach to addressing topical issues of international security. It is only by resuming a constructive international dialogue that we can overcome military and political tensions and restore global confidence on the planet.

We call on all States to build concerted international action based on the principles of respect for the fundamental tenets of international law, such as unconditional recognition of the sovereignty of States over their territory, as exemplified by a one and indivisible China.

Belarus welcomes the initiatives taken by China in the Conference on Disarmament, including those on prevention of an arms race in outer space. We would also like to stress the importance of the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in promoting stability and security in one of the largest regions of the world. Belarus, as an observer in that Organization, cooperates actively with its Chinese partners in a wide range of its activities.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Belarus. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Zimbabwe. I give the floor to Ambassador Stuart Harold Comberbach.

Mr. Comberbach (Zimbabwe): Allow me first to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during the execution of your mandate.

This is the first time that I have addressed the Conference on Disarmament since taking up my assignment as the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva. It gives me great pleasure to join this very distinguished community of permanent representatives accredited to the Conference. I wish to thank you, Mr President, for your warm words of welcome; thanks which I also extend to all my colleagues.

The Conference has played a critical role in the negotiation and conclusion of key arms control agreements in the past, the last of which – the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty – was successfully negotiated and concluded over two decades ago. Zimbabwe shares the sense of disappointment that we have been unable to achieve much progress since its adoption by the General Assembly in 1996. In the interim, the weapons landscape has become increasingly complicated, with nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them becoming much more sophisticated, further threatening humanity and life as we know it.

Mr. President, Zimbabwe stands for the total elimination of nuclear weapons as the only absolute guarantee against their use or the threat of such use. We also call 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 such weapons, pending the achievement of the total elimination objective.

Let me reiterate, however, that any provision of negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States might only offer a false sense of security because it is only through the total elimination of nuclear weapons that any such assurance or guarantee can be fully honoured or upheld. We therefore reiterate our call for nuclear-weapon States to engage in serious, good-faith negotiations aimed at the reduction, elimination and, ultimately, the banning of all such weapons.

During the 2019 session, my predecessor submitted an ambitious proposal aimed at facilitating some continuity in the work of the Conference. That proposal, which called for a multi-year programme of work whereby an agreed programme of work could or would be rolled over to future sessions of the Conference, reflected, I believe, the frustration we all feel with the individual Conference presidency's limited four-week time horizon. We listened carefully and were encouraged by comments and other ideas emerging from the proposal during what we viewed as a constructive debate among colleagues genuinely looking for a practical way forward.

Mr. President, we believe that we must collectively take the necessary steps to address what could be termed as the institutional drift or mandate creep now affecting the Conference, and to try to bring the Conference back on track from being a deliberative forum, which it currently is, to being the negotiating forum it is intended to be. This will require political will and greater understanding on all sides, specifically to avoid further polarization and politicization of issues, and a deliberate, concerted commitment by all to restore confidence in, and the credibility of, this crucially important institution.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Zimbabwe. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Cuba, Mr. Juan Quintanilla Román.

Mr. Quintanilla Román (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, please allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference of Disarmament and assure you of my country's support for your presidency and your personal assignments in this important United Nations body.

Mr. President, it is an honour for Cuba to attend today's plenary meeting of this Conference, where we have had the opportunity to hear the intervention of His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China. The distinguished speaker's intervention today was broad-based, all-encompassing, and touched on many issues that are crucial to international security. We, like many others, are pleased to hear of the Chinese Government's commitment and ratification of that commitment to disarmament, non-proliferation and multilateralism.

Cuba shares the view of China and many others that the major challenges faced by humanity in this era can only be resolved through multilateral action that puts respect, dialogue and cooperation first. It is very gratifying and very positive to have high-level speakers like the Minister of Foreign Affairs participate in the Conference on Disarmament. We reassure China of the friendship of the Cuban people and Government and stand ready to continue working to advance the mandate of this Conference.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Cuba and now give the floor to the representative of Egypt, Mr. Ramy Elsayed.

Mr. Elsayed (Egypt): First, allow me to seize this opportunity to welcome the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to the Conference on Disarmament, to wish him success in his duties and to assure him of my delegation's full support.

Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank the Foreign Minister of China, a country with which Egypt enjoys excellent bilateral relations, for his pertinent remarks and for his address to the Conference at this critical juncture.

The President: I thank the representative of Egypt and now give the floor to the Ambassador of Ethiopia, Mr. Zenebe Kebede Korcho.

Mr. Korcho (Ethiopia): Allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You can count on my delegation's support.

I would also like to add my voice in thanking Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, and supporting his important statement. Ethiopia attaches great importance to a well-functioning and rule-based multilateral system. In fact, multilateralism has been the hallmark of its diplomacy. In this regard, Ethiopia has been making a meaningful and constructive contribution within the framework of the United Nations, not only on issues of peace and security, but also on other issues of global interest and concern such as climate change, poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Equally importantly, as a signatory of major disarmament instruments and a responsible member of the international system, Ethiopia is committed to the principles of arms control, disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and new methods and means of warfare such as cyberattacks.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to reaffirm the commitment and support of Ethiopia for the resumption of the Conference on Disarmament's core mandate, which is the negotiation of legally binding disarmament instruments, as a matter of utmost priority.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Ethiopia. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Brazil, Mr. Gonalo de Barros Carvalho e Mello Mouro, my fellow President of this year's session of the Conference.

Mr. De Barros Carvalho e Mello Mouro (Brazil): Mr. President, in the first instance I would like to give the warmest welcome to our distinguished colleague from Zimbabwe, Ambassador Stuart Comberbach, who is yet another representative of a peaceful country to join this Conference, and we wish him all the best for his mission in Geneva.

Mr. President, although we are not, unfortunately, currently dealing with the substantial business of our Conference, which is to negotiate, I would like to express the compliments of my delegation to Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, for coming here today to present his country's views on the matters under discussion. Hearing a member of the highest diplomatic authority of China explain the positions of his country is a positive step that moves forward the simple thematic discussions we have been having here.

The President: I thank Ambassador De Barros Carvalho e Mello Mouro of Brazil. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Chile, Mr. Frank Tressler Zamorano.

Mr. Tressler Zamorano (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I should like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference. We thank you for the detailed planning of the thematic discussions. The number of interventions we have heard affirms the delegations' interest in participating. We take this opportunity to extend our greetings and appreciation to the previous Presidents of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament – Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria – as well as the next one – Canada.

Also recognizing the value of the formula that brings together the six Presidents of the 2021 session with their immediate predecessor and immediate successor in the performance of our specific tasks, we welcome the participation of His Excellency State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi in today's meeting, which testifies to the importance the People's Republic of China attaches to the Conference on Disarmament. Today, more than ever, the commitment of all is needed to revive and enhance the work of the Conference on Disarmament. The commitment of China to disarmament, peace and security in the world is particularly welcome.

We must get back to work in the Conference on Disarmament, whose natural role is to negotiate treaties or instruments that pave the way to a world free of weapons of mass destruction. We view the current path with concern and hope that the necessary consensus will be reached to restore the leading role of this Conference. Chile will assume the presidency of the Conference next August, taking over from Canada and preceding the People's Republic of China. In this regard, rest assured that we will work collaboratively to strengthen this noble institution.

Mr. President, we look forward to continuing to work with you and the observer States in the coming weeks, in particular when our turn comes to assume this responsibility.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Chile and give the floor to the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, Ms. Zhanar Aitzhanova.

Ms. Aitzhanova (Kazakhstan): I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, for his address to the Conference on Disarmament as part of the high-level segment of the 2021 session.

We fully share the Minister's view that it is critically important to maintain and strengthen the Conference on Disarmament, the core principle of which is consensus. We call on all participants to show political will and overcome differences so that the Conference can revitalize its work. As you are well aware, Kazakhstan strongly believes that nuclear disarmament, a fissile material cut-off treaty, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances should remain among the key priorities of the Conference.

Kazakhstan highly appreciates the support of China for the proposal of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan concerning the establishment of a special multilateral body – the international agency for biological safety – which would be accountable to the Security Council. This proposal is particularly relevant in the current global context and highlights the urgency of creating a multilateral body to coordinate the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention.

I wish to point out that a concept paper was circulated recently among the Permanent Missions in Geneva, and we look forward to engaging in in-depth discussions on this proposal with all interested delegations.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Kazakhstan. I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya, Ms. Anne Keah.

Ms. Keah (Kenya): Mr. President, please allow me to convey the apologies of His Excellency Mr. Cleopa Mailu, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kenya, who is unable to join us this morning due to other official engagements. I also wish to extend our sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and to commend you on your able leadership of our deliberations. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of Kenya during your presidency.

The delegation of Kenya joins you in welcoming the distinguished Ambassador of Zimbabwe and conveys to him our best wishes for a successful tour of duty. The delegation of Kenya also appreciates the address made by Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, during the high-level segment of the 2021 Session of the Conference, and underscores the excellent bilateral relations between our two countries.

Kenya reaffirms the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. Since its recognition in 1978, during the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, the Conference's unique mandate on multilateral arms control and disarmament issues has made it an integral forum for the maintenance of global peace and security.

Regrettably, the Conference's failure to adopt a programme of work for yet another year has once again impeded this august body from living up to its mandate. Flexibility, pragmatism and political will are crucial to unlocking the impasse that plagues the Conference.

The delegation of Kenya encourages the two largest nuclear powers to enhance their dialogue and cooperation with a view to further strengthening international arms control. While Kenya welcomes these bilateral arrangements, we firmly believe that the ultimate assurance of a safer world lies in multilateral arrangements. In this regard, as an elected non-permanent member of the Security Council, Kenya will advocate for continuous engagement with the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, my delegation notes with concern that the illicit transfer of and trade in small arms and light weapons continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security. The effects of the widespread availability and misuse of small arms have for too long contributed to many unnecessary conflicts around the world. With this conviction, on 9

June – just earlier this week – His Excellency the Honourable Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya and Commander-in-Chief of the Kenyan Defence Forces, led the nation in burning 5,144 illegal weapons, demonstrating the determination and readiness of Kenya to face the challenges posed by small arms and light weapons. Similarly, as Chair-designate of the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which will be held from 26 to 30 July 2021, Kenya is committed to the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument.

Finally, our commitment to disarmament and to the maintenance of international peace and security is further demonstrated by our role as Chair of the 2020 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We take this opportunity to thank the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention for the flexibility they have demonstrated in achieving consensus on the schedule of meetings, which we hope will set the necessary momentum for the Ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention in 2022. The relevance of this Convention as an integral instrument for international peace and security, global health and the well-being of mankind is more important now than ever before.

The President: I thank Ms. Keah of Kenya. The next speaker on my list is Mr. Esmaeil Baghaei Hamaneh, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Baghaei Hamaneh (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I have taken the floor during your presidency, I would like to congratulate you and Cameroon for assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

My delegation appreciates the presence of Mr. Wang Yi, the State Councillor and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, at the Conference on Disarmament. We listened very carefully to His Excellency's important remarks. We appreciate the constructive and responsible approach of China in relevant negotiating processes and the country's commitment to multilateralism.

Mr. President, multilateralism entails respect for collective norm-making and standard-setting processes, respect for the outcome of those processes and a commitment to the mandate and confines of international institutions. The overall purpose of this collective endeavour is to responsibly serve the international community's common good by maximizing shared interests and minimizing common threats and challenges. Unfortunately, unilateralism has no regard for the commitments that respective countries have undertaken in accordance with bilateral or multilateral agreements, or even under Security Council resolutions. Countries that follow the path of unilateralism have not hesitated to violate their obligations under their key bilateral treaties and multilateral deals without any justification.

Unilateralism has been the prime cause of degrading security environments across the globe. Radical unilateralism continues to pose a constant threat to law and order and to peace and security. It continues to inflict severe damage, not only on international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, but also on human life and dignity through unilateral coercive measures of all sorts. The rule of law and *pacta sunt servanda* are the two main casualties of unilateralism; lawlessness, insecurity, violence and chaos are its main products.

Mr. President, the Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, as mandated by the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and reaffirmed by consecutive General Assembly resolutions. Despite the frustrating deadlock, this body remains the single multilateral negotiating forum on nuclear disarmament, and we should all appreciate that. The Conference's longest stalemate, which has prevented it from fulfilling its mandate, can only be reversed if all members, principally the nuclear-weapon States, demonstrate political will and live up to their commitments on nuclear disarmament.

The year 2021 coincides with some key events in the area of disarmament and we must seize this as momentum for advancing the Conference's mandate. We began the year

with the entry into force on 22 January of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which provides an important indication of the international community's collective demand for total nuclear disarmament.

We hope to be able to hold the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a fully-fledged in-person conference soon. Our focus must remain on ensuring a forward-looking and successful Review Conference. Previous commitments for all three pillars – disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses – of the Non-Proliferation Treaty remain valid and form the basis for making further progress towards realizing the objectives of the Treaty. It is indispensable that the upcoming Review Conference sends an unequivocal message that nuclear weapons must never be used again and that nuclear disarmament is the only guarantee that can safeguard that purpose. The disarmament obligation is universal and unconditional.

We strongly reject any initiative or concept that may imply conditionality for nuclear disarmament obligations such as the initiative called “creating the conditions for nuclear disarmament” or the one on “creating an environment for nuclear disarmament”. Likewise, concepts such as positive security assurances would only contradict the very basic mandate and philosophy of the Conference on Disarmament.

In conclusion, Mr. President, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues its constructive engagement to contribute against all the odds to regional and international peace and security based on a responsible and forward-looking approach.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Argentina, Mr. Federico Villegas.

Mr. Villegas (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, as this is the first time I take the floor under your mandate, please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and on your excellent work in conducting the thematic debates on the different agenda items and in steering this high-level segment. I would also like to welcome our new colleague, the permanent representative of Zimbabwe.

Mr. President, my delegation welcomes the participation of His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, in the Conference on Disarmament today. The participation of the highest authorities helps to advance our exchanges and debates and serves as a reminder of the importance of this august body in strengthening global peace and security. However, in order for the Conference on Disarmament to achieve this desired and necessary objective, members must fulfil the mandate it received in 1978, which is to negotiate legally binding instruments on disarmament.

In this connection, I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate my delegation's tireless appeal to revitalize the work of this Conference by adopting a programme of work that would enable us to start negotiating these instruments. We should bear in mind that, after years of discussion, several of these issues, including the topic of negative security assurances, which was discussed last week, are now mature enough for this stage.

Mr. President, as the President of the Sixth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, held in 2020, and in my capacity as Co-Chair of the Working Group on Treaty Universalization during the current cycle, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate China on its accession to the Treaty in July 2020. Bearing in mind the important role played by the People's Republic of China in the international trade in conventional weapons, its accession is an important milestone in the history of the Treaty, which will hopefully not only inspire more countries in the Asian region – which is woefully underrepresented in the Treaty – to accede, but also motivate other major arms importers and exporters to consider signature and ratification.

The Treaty does not only regulate the arms trade, it is an instrument intended to reduce human suffering, and my delegation will therefore continue to make every possible effort in pursuit of its universalization.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Argentina and give the floor to the next speaker on my list, Ms. Erika Martínez Liévano of Mexico.

Ms. Martínez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, please allow me to start by commending you on the way in which you are steering the Conference on Disarmament during your tenure. We also welcome the close cooperation between the six Presidents of this year's session in guiding our work collaboratively and with a comprehensive vision of this year's session, rather than a short-term vision or one aimed at advancing national interests only. We further welcome the cooperation between the six Presidents of this year's session and their immediate predecessor and immediate successor. The participation of Belarus and the People's Republic of China in the organization of our work ensures a certain continuity over the years in our efforts to take forward the important issues that fall within the remit of this Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, we are pleased to welcome His Excellency Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, to this august body today for the high-level segment of the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament. We are grateful that he has shared his vision for progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation with us. Mexico fully agrees on the importance of multilateralism in the consolidation of a secure and peaceful world and, in particular, in making tangible and gradual progress towards the consolidation of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We certainly hope that the important high-level statements made in 2021 will serve to boost political commitment to the Conference on Disarmament and, in particular, to my country's ongoing call for compliance with the mandate conferred on the Conference by the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of Mexico and now give the floor to Ambassador Soualem of Algeria.

Mr. Soualem (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would first like to thank you for having organized this plenary meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to greet our colleague, the Ambassador of Zimbabwe, and wish him a warm welcome.

The Algerian delegation would also like to welcome the participation in this high-level meeting of His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. His Excellency has reaffirmed his country's commitment to non-proliferation and its full support for multilateralism. The questions raised are strikingly relevant and emphasize the indivisibility of peace, security and development. My country shares that approach, including in respect of the revitalization of our Conference to render it the universal forum for discussion of disarmament in the service of the common good and to reduce all threats.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Algeria and now give the floor to Ambassador Khalil Hashmi of Pakistan.

Mr. Hashmi (Pakistan): My delegation extends a warm welcome to State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi of the People's Republic of China and thanks him for his statement outlining a comprehensive and collective vision of an advanced global security system anchored in the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

We commend China for its strong support for multilateralism and its common vision of international security. We highly value the contribution of China to the strengthening of international peace and security and the promotion of arms control. We look forward to working closely with China and other members of the Conference on Disarmament to advance international arms control disarmament as a critical tool to protect, promote and preserve global peace and security for everyone.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan. The next speaker on my list is Mr. Andrey Belousov of the Russian Federation

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to begin by welcoming our distinguished colleague from Zimbabwe, the Permanent Representative of that country, and to wish him good luck and success in his work in the Conference on Disarmament, of course, and, in Geneva in general.

I would also like to express my appreciation to our Chinese colleagues for having organized for His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, to make the statement we have just heard, a fact of great importance for the Conference on Disarmament, that has contributed to our understanding of the approach of the People's Republic of China to the issues that we are dealing with here.

Russia and China are linked by a strategic partnership, so it was very important for the Russian delegation to hear that the approaches of our countries on most of the issues on the disarmament agenda coincide, or at least are in harmony.

Minister Wang Yi outlined a wide range of issues that are directly related to international security, and their solution will unquestionably have an impact on the sustainable development not only of individual States and regions and but also of humanity as a whole. In that regard, his statement sent a strong signal encouraging us to reflect on what he emphasized should be collective efforts to address those problems.

It also conveyed the important message that China intends to continue to actively support entities that are directly engaged in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. This is a demonstration of the balanced and responsible approach of the People's Republic of China to the activities of these entities, that were established on the principles of equality and multilateralism and which face the challenges of addressing the most pressing issues in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

Once again, I should like to thank our Chinese colleagues for that statement, which is very important to the Russian Federation and, I hope, very useful to all the member States of the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I thank Mr. Belousov of the Russian Federation. The next speaker on my list is Mr. Osama Ali of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ali (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic welcomes the participation of His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, in today's meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Our delegation listened attentively to the points he made in his statement, which unequivocally reflected the commitment of China to multilateralism and to the vital role played by the United Nations in addressing the challenges facing the world today. He reiterated the commitment of China to nuclear disarmament and reflected its consistent policies in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament. My country shares the conviction of China that the Conference on Disarmament should resume its pivotal role in the field of disarmament.

Lastly, my delegation highly appreciates the reaffirmation by the Minister of his country's commitment to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The President: I thank Mr. Ali of the Syrian Arab Republic. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Indonesia, and I give the floor to Mr. Indra Rosandry.

Mr. Rosandry (Indonesia): First of all, my delegation would like to welcome Ambassador Stuart Comberbach, Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to Geneva, and to wish him all the best in the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Indonesia would also like to seize this opportunity to welcome Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, to the Conference on Disarmament this morning. We take note of his remarks and the importance he places on this august forum. As part of the Conference on Disarmament family, Indonesia always welcomes any efforts that could contribute to building trust and enriching the culture of dialogue and consultation among countries in this Conference, so that this forum can move forward and contribute to the maintenance of peace and security.

The President: I thank Mr. Rosandry of Indonesia, who was the last speaker on my list. I now give the floor to Ambassador Robert Wood of the United States of America, who wishes to exercise the right of reply.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I am taking the floor to exercise my right of reply to the remarks made by the distinguished Chinese State Councillor Wang Yi.

First, let me say that I appreciate the Chinese State Councillor's remarks covering the views of China on a number of issues. It is great to hear of his interest in reducing global tensions. I think that is important. Given that interest, my Government again calls on the People's Republic of China to engage with the United States in bilateral discussions on risk reduction and strategic stability. To date, China has rebuffed the efforts of the United States to initiate bilateral talks on risk reduction and strategic stability. Engaging in discussions on these issues within multilateral forums, such as the "P5" formats involving the five permanent members of the Security Council, is important but insufficient for reducing tensions or enhancing strategic stability.

The overall goal of the United States has been, is and will continue to be to uphold the rules-based international order that has helped to keep the peace and spread prosperity for more than seven decades. We will continue to vigorously oppose efforts by those States trying to undermine that order or trying to reshape it in their own autocratic image.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America. Ambassador Li Song has asked to take the floor.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like first of all to extend a warm welcome to the Ambassadors of Zimbabwe and Iraq to the Conference family. I look forward to active communication and cooperation with them.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the secretariat for the thoughtful arrangements you have made for today's plenary meeting. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Valovaya for her personal presence at today's plenary meeting. I would further like to thank all the ambassadors and delegates for their participation, as well as all those who have just made positive comments on the video message of State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in their statements.

Today's plenary meeting fully demonstrates that the majority of Conference on Disarmament member States are strongly desirous of and firmly confident in upholding genuine multilateralism, advancing the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes and working towards common security in the new international situation.

The Chinese delegation stands ready to join you in continuing unrelentingly to advance the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to respond briefly to the reply just given by the Ambassador of the United States.

China has never refused to engage in bilateral dialogue with the five permanent member States of the Security Council, including the United States, on matters of strategic stability and security. We look forward to frank communication with countries, including the United States, around strategic security and arms control issues. Through dialogue based on equality and mutual respect, we will enhance strategic mutual trust and work together to maintain international security and stability.

At the same time, I also hope to work together with my American colleagues to advance the work of the Conference so that it can, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, make its due contribution to the continued promotion of an international security order based on international law and the multilateral arms control process.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of China. I have a second request to exercise the right of reply from Ambassador Wood of the United States of America, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, after hearing the response from the distinguished Chinese Ambassador, I just want to ask a question, given that he has said that China has never rejected having bilateral discussions with the United States. My question is simply: is China willing, in this plenary session, to agree to hold bilateral discussions with

the United States on risk reduction and strategic stability? It is a very simple question to which I respectfully ask my Chinese colleague to respond.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America. Ambassador Li Song, you have the floor.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, I have always had a very good working relationship with Ambassador Wood. I don't know why Ambassador Wood must communicate repeatedly through this plenary forum of the Conference on the issue of bilateral dialogue between China and the United States.

I am reluctant to waste the time of the member States of the Conference in repeatedly providing such explanations. However, since he has raised this issue on this platform, I have no choice but to say a few more words. We have repeatedly stressed, even during the Trump administration, that the door to dialogue between China and the United States on any issue is always open. As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, China and the United States should maintain normal communication on such issues as international strategic security and stability, peace and security, and arms control. We have continued to manifest a positive attitude along these lines even after the change of Government in the United States. But to my knowledge, the new United States administration has not put forward any formal proposals or requests to us, either through capital channels or through bilateral channels, on dialogue in this regard.

So, what I wish to say here is that China has always been open to dialogue with the United States, on a basis of equality and mutual respect, regarding issues around strategic security and stability and international arms control and non-proliferation.

I believe that dialogue in this regard should be communicated and implemented through our two capitals, through bilateral channels. For my own part, I always look forward to engaging in communication with Ambassador Wood at any time, around the Conference and around the multilateral arms control efforts that are within our purview.

The President: I thank Ambassador Li Song. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? It seems not. Distinguished colleagues, let me again thank Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China for his statement to the Conference.

Our next plenary meeting will take place on Tuesday, 15 June, on agenda item 5, new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons. Further information on the plenary meeting will be communicated through the Conference on Disarmament secretariat.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.