

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand three hundred and seventy-first plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 26 January 2016, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Mr. Peters Omologbe Emuze (Nigeria)

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The President: I call to order the 1371st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me start off by extending to you all my best wishes for the new year, and may 2016 be a productive year for the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to propose that the order of business of our meeting this morning be as follows: first, the adoption of the agenda for the 2016 session of the Conference; second, the consideration of requests from non-member States to participate in the work of the Conference at this session; third, delivery of my statement as President of the Conference; and fourth, delivery of the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations by Mr. Kim Won-soo, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, followed by statements by delegations who may wish to speak.

I would like to invite you now to consider the draft agenda for the 2016 session of the Conference as contained in document CD/WP.592 that is before you. I propose that the agenda be accompanied by a presidential statement which is the same as in previous years and reads as follows: "In connection with the adoption of the agenda, I, as President of the Conference, should like to state that it is my understanding that if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with within this agenda. The Conference will also take into consideration rules 27 and 30 of the rules of procedure of the Conference."

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this time? May I take it that the Conference is ready to adopt the agenda as contained in document CD/WP.592, followed by the statement I have just read?

It was so decided.

The President: The agenda will be issued as an official document of the Conference by the secretariat.

Let me now turn to the list of requests from States not members of the Conference who wish to participate in our work during the 2016 session. If accepted, they should be able to already sit in the room this morning. These requests are now before you in document CD/WP.593, which includes all the requests that the secretariat received until yesterday, 25 January 2016, at 4 p.m. Any request from a non-member State received after that date will be presented for your consideration and decision at the next plenary meetings. Are there any comments on these requests? May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: Allow me to suspend the meeting for a brief moment in order to allow the representatives of the non-member States who have just been invited to participate in the work of the Conference to take their seats in the Council Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: Before we proceed to the next item on the agenda, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the following new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments to this Conference: Mr. Yury Ambrazevich, Permanent Representative of Belarus; Ms. Rosemary McCarney, Permanent Representative of Canada; Ms. Beatriz Londoño Soto, Permanent Representative of Colombia; Ms. Tehmina Janjua, Permanent Representative of Pakistan; Mr. Piotr Stachanczyk, Permanent Representative of Poland; Mr. Kim Young-moo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea; Mr. Adrian Vierita, Permanent Representative of Romania; and Ms. Veronika Bard, Permanent Representative of Sweden.

It is my distinct pleasure to also welcome and introduce to you today our new Acting Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Mary Soliman. Ms. Soliman has a long and distinguished career at the United Nations in Geneva and New York, and until recently she served as Chief of the Regional Disarmament Branch of the Office of Disarmament Affairs in New York. Ms. Soliman, on behalf of all the colleagues here in the room, a warm welcome to the Conference on Disarmament and to Geneva. We are looking forward to working with you. On behalf of my own Government and on behalf of the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of our full cooperation and support in your new assignment.

Before I invite Mr. Kim Won-soo, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to deliver the message of the United Nations Secretary-General, and Mr. Michael Møller to make a statement in his capacity as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, please allow me at this stage to make a statement in my capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

Nigeria is honoured to assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2016. The responsibilities of the office of President impose a heavy challenge on both the incumbent and the member States of the Conference. This onerous task bequeaths on us a great responsibility to join hands together in taking the work of the Conference forward.

Permit me, therefore, to express my sincere gratitude to all delegations for the past efforts they have put in to advance the work in the Conference in 2015. During the course of the past few weeks, Nigeria — in anticipation of her presidency — engaged broadly with a cross section of delegations, including the six Presidents of last year's session, the six Presidents of the current session, regional groups and many others. To date we have met with over 20 delegations in the course of seeking wise counsel on how to break the impasse that has stalled negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. Let me assure you that we have benefited from these consultations. I can inform you that the groundswell of opinion points to a willingness on the part of delegations to progress on the issues that have stalled negotiations on the core main issues of the Conference's agenda. We wish to further assure you that the process of our engagement will continue during the Nigerian presidency until we can find common ground to break the impasse that has stalled negotiations.

The Conference on Disarmament remains the sole multilateral negotiating platform through which total disarmament can be achieved and the fulcrum on which man's hope rests for a nuclear-free world.

Despite the achievements attained by the Conference and its predecessors in negotiating the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, it is regrettable that negotiation in the Conference has remained deadlocked for two decades. The non-entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the failure of the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference to adopt a final document show the need for serious and urgent negotiation to resume in the Conference on Disarmament. However, we encourage States to comply with their obligations under the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Let me end by saying that negotiations have failed because we have failed as diplomats to advise our Governments. We cannot achieve meaningful negotiations without compromise. Let us not allow our national interests to override global interests in our negotiations for a nuclear-weapon-free world. The world must commit to a nuclear disarmament programme, and what we do in this room will either make or mar that commitment. The Nigerian presidency will encourage continuous discussions on all the core agenda items of the Conference in the belief that the time has come for its revitalization and the commencement of substantive negotiations on the programme of

work. Negotiations in the Conference have become deadlocked not because of the procedures put in place for its work but due to a lack of political will and a failure to appreciate the security concerns of some. We cannot afford to have the Conference deadlocked any longer. Therefore, we would like to encourage delegations to consider themselves not merely representatives of national governments but crucial partners in the global security-building effort. As the first President for 2016, our understanding of rules 28 and 29 of the rules of procedure of the Conference requires us to submit a draft programme of work for consideration and adoption by consensus. We hope we can count on the support of all delegations.

It is now my pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Kim Won-soo to deliver the message of the United Nations Secretary-General.

Mr. Kim Won-soo (Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): It is a great pleasure for me to be back here some seven months after I met you upon the assumption of my new duties. Please allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption of your leadership role in this body. I trust your consistent efforts and commitment to disarmament, as highlighted by yourself just now, will serve the Conference on Disarmament well to move things forward in the first two weeks of the 2016 session.

I now have the privilege to deliver a message on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon:

I am pleased to send my greetings to all those taking part in the Conference on Disarmament as it begins its 2016 session. In my first message to this body as Secretary-General nine years ago, I emphasized the importance of reinvigorating disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. I looked to this Conference to rise to the challenge. However, we have seen little progress, and the inability to negotiate has been business as usual. As a result, two goals I outlined almost a decade ago have become more urgent than ever.

First, the world must do more to prevent the expansion or further development of nuclear arsenals. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was designed for that purpose and negotiated in this body. This year marks 20 years since it has been open for signature. The recent nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was deeply destabilizing for regional security and seriously undermines international non-proliferation efforts. As the fourth such test to break the de facto moratorium in this century, it was a stark reminder of the urgent need to permanently codify the global norm against nuclear tests. Now is the time to make the final push to secure the Treaty's entry into force as well as to achieve its universality. In the interim, States should consider how to strengthen the de facto moratorium on nuclear tests so that no State can use the current status of the Treaty as an excuse to conduct a nuclear test.

Second, the international community must accelerate the reduction of existing stockpiles. Nuclear-armed States should continue to reduce deployed arsenals and improve transparency. A treaty on fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices would be a prerequisite for sustainable nuclear disarmament. It would render the nuclear disarmament process irreversible. This would also help prevent terrorists from accessing or stealing weapons-usable material.

This month, two days ago marked the seventieth anniversary of the first resolution ever adopted by the General Assembly. That resolution sought specific measures for the elimination of atomic weapons and all other weapons adaptable to mass destruction. Despite some progress, that objective remains unfulfilled.

Growing awareness of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has created a new sense of urgency. Yet, as our efforts to adopt effective measures for disarmament continue to be frustrated, the gap between the positions has grown wider. We must work together to fill this gap.

While this Conference has not been able to break its deadlock, States have made use of other forums to negotiate important new legal instruments, including rules for responsible trade in conventional arms, prohibiting anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, and addressing the explosive remnants of war. Yet, every day we confront new challenges posed by nuclear weapons and the over-accumulation of conventional arms.

During my tenure as Secretary-General, I have done my best to help reinvigorate this body and to advance multilateral disarmament negotiations. This included my five-point plan of 2008 and the high-level meeting I convened in 2010.

I will continue to spare no effort, but the ultimate burden rests on the members of this Conference to bridge the gaps and find an urgent solution to the chronic impasse. Without such concrete action, this Conference risks becoming completely marginalized.

I encourage the Conference to live up to its responsibility as the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament.

That concludes the message of the Secretary-General. I would now request your indulgence in allowing me to say a few more words of my own on this occasion.

We must remind ourselves that our work in disarmament is never siloed, as each contribution further strengthens international peace and security. We also need to reflect deeply on the fast-evolving security landscape in which this Conference is working. To offer one example, though I do not want to sound like a doomsayer, it is not impossible to contemplate a nightmarish scenario of the use of nuclear materials by non-State actors. In this context, negotiating a multilateral legally binding instrument that addresses the vital component of nuclear disarmament that is fissile material will contribute a lot to the fight against nuclear terrorism as well as to the broader objective of nuclear non-proliferation and of a world free of nuclear weapons. I therefore plead with you once again to positively consider any proposal to take forward a substantive programme of work, including negotiations on a treaty on fissile materials. A significant opportunity lies ahead of this body during this new session. The Conference should and can reassert itself as the indispensable negotiating component of the United Nations disarmament machinery. Nonetheless, with this opportunity also comes the danger of yet another annual session during which no negotiations commence. I count on the collective wisdom of this Conference to avoid this danger, seize the opportunity to demonstrate the Conference's relevance and break the current impasse.

The President: At this time I would like to turn to the list of speakers for today. As announced yesterday to the regional coordinators, it is my intention to finalize the presentation of general statements today so that we can concentrate on the substance from the next meeting onward.

The following delegations have requested to take the floor: United States, Republic of Korea, Canada, Germany, Poland, Finland, Australia, Morocco, Spain, Japan, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Pakistan and United Kingdom. I would now like to give the floor to the representative of the United States, Ambassador Robert Wood.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I am pleased to congratulate you on your assumption of the Conference on Disarmament presidency as we begin the 2016 session. I want to assure you that you can count on the support of the United States in

your efforts to guide the work of this forum in what we hope will be an historic and path-breaking year for the Conference.

We are coming off the heels of another challenging year in the Conference, but the United States continues to have faith in this distinguished forum. In the past, when the Conference has been able to negotiate on substance, it has made great progress in the fields of arms control and disarmament, resulting in landmark agreements. We firmly believe there is both the need and the opportunity to do so again. Nothing makes this clearer than the intensity of last year's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference and the session of the First Committee of the General Assembly.

The Conference has to get back to work. This will require some flexibility on the part of all member States, and the United States stands ready to do its part. Indeed, in preparation for the 2016 Conference session, the United States delegation has offered the Nigerian presidency ideas for a programme of work seeking to address the expressed concerns of some States. We hope that others will demonstrate a similar spirit of flexibility and that consensus will be achieved. My delegation will continue to work openly and constructively with our Conference colleagues to develop ideas to break the current impasse.

In addition, cognizant of the strong and abiding interest of a number of States in joining this forum, the United States remains open to discussing a limited, appropriate expansion of the Conference's membership. We also believe it would be appropriate for the Conference to consider updating its engagement with civil society. The approach employed at the First Committee could be a useful model in this regard.

The United States is committed to seeking the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. To achieve this long-term objective, my nation continues to pursue a practical, full-spectrum approach. By steadily reducing the role and number of nuclear weapons in a way that advances strategic stability, we create the conditions and opportunities for further progress.

As part of this full-spectrum approach to disarmament, the United States has reduced its total stockpile of warheads by 85 per cent from its cold war peak. The United States is fulfilling all our treaty obligations, including those of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which has long been a pillar of European and international security. Moreover, in line with our 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, the United States has reduced further the role of nuclear weapons in its national strategy, and made clear that the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States that are parties to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations. And it is important to underscore that the United States is neither developing new nuclear weapons, nor are we pursuing any new nuclear missions. Our stockpile stewardship and management activities are intended only to sustain existing warhead designs while further enhancing the safety and security of a shrinking stockpile.

On 5 February of this year, the United States and the Russian Federation will mark the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the New START Treaty, the most comprehensive nuclear arms control agreement in more than 20 years. Both sides continue to successfully implement the Treaty as we move ever closer to the deadline to meet the Treaty's central limits by 5 February 2018. When the Treaty is fully implemented, deployed nuclear weapons of the United States and the Russian Federation will reach their lowest levels since the 1950s. As the steady implementation of the New START Treaty proceeds, President Obama has made clear his willingness to seek further reductions of up to one third below those New START Treaty levels. Of course, progress will require a willing partner and a conducive strategic environment.

Beyond these ongoing efforts, the United States is working for multilateral arms control and disarmament progress. In this context, it is clear that a treaty that constrains the building blocks of nuclear weapons — a fissile material cut-off treaty — is the next logical and achievable step for the international community and, more specifically, for the Conference.

At home in the United States, we are continuing to work to build support for ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, making the case to our citizens and legislators that it is in our national security interest.

As we seek to promote multilateral progress towards nuclear disarmament, it is more important than ever to find ways for nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States to engage in dialogue and constructive cooperation on disarmament matters. As a contribution to this dialogue and cooperation, the United States and the Nuclear Threat Initiative launched the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification in December 2014. This exciting new endeavour brings together 27 States — States with and States without nuclear weapons — committed to exploring what tools and technologies will be needed to effectively verify future nuclear disarmament agreements. We were very pleased with the outcome of the second plenary of the Partnership, hosted by Norway last November, and we look forward to the first meeting of the Partnership's three working groups here in Geneva next month.

As we have emphasized in this and other forums, we are ever mindful of the potential humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use. Our understanding of these consequences has underpinned United States efforts to achieve deep reductions in our nuclear arsenal in ways that take account of and promote strategic stability and international security. They also underpin our concerted efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, especially to terrorists. These efforts benefit all of us. We also know that effective nuclear arms control and disarmament measures cannot be pursued in a vacuum, and restrictions, reductions and eliminations by themselves do not ensure greater security in the absence of strategic stability and effective verification. It is for this reason that President Obama has made clear that we work towards the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons; but so long as such weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure and effective arsenal to deter any adversary and guarantee the defence of our allies.

Recent events in North Korea remind us of the grave security challenges that we face. As United States Secretary of State Kerry stated on 6 January:

The United States and nations around the world have unequivocally condemned North Korea's latest nuclear test. This highly provocative act poses a grave threat to international peace and security and blatantly violates multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions. The United States is committed to defending the American people and honouring our security commitment to our allies in the region. We do not and will not accept North Korea as a nuclear-armed State, and actions such as this latest test only strengthen our resolve. We will continue to work closely with our partners on the United Nations Security Council and in the Six-Party Talks to take appropriate action. We call on the North to end these provocations and choose a better path. North Korea will only achieve the security and development it claims to seek by living up to its international obligations and commitments.

While North Korea continues to ignore its commitments to the global non-proliferation regime, it is important to recognize the recent progress to strengthen that regime. The United States welcomes the International Atomic Energy Agency report verifying that Iran has completed the nuclear-related steps it committed to under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The United States also welcomes the joint statement from the European Union and Iran, on behalf of all the Plan of Action participants, confirming

that we have reached “implementation day”. Continued adherence to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action will ensure that the Iranian nuclear programme is and remains exclusively peaceful.

Finally, we have all seen and are mindful of the benefits of persistent, tireless diplomacy. That is why the United States believes it is high time for the Conference’s member States to redouble our efforts to reach agreement on a programme of work. We know that there are no shortcuts to a nuclear-free world or any viable alternatives to practical, verifiable disarmament, but in this body we can blaze a trail for progress. Given all that the Conference has accomplished in the past and its continued potential, the United States looks forward to working with other Conference member States to seize the promising opportunities before us.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Kim Young-moo.

Mr. Kim Young-moo (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, first of all let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. As one of the six Presidents of this year’s session, I would like to assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation during your presidency. My delegation is also pleased to welcome the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Kim Won-soo, on the occasion of his visit to the Conference on Disarmament today with an important message from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

This year, the Conference is going through a strenuous year of stalemate. My delegation shares the deep concern that the Conference has continuously failed to live up to its stated purpose. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon laid out in his message last year, and again this year through the High Representative, Mr. Kim Won-soo, the effectiveness of the Conference will be judged ultimately on a single criterion: its ability to conclude disarmament treaties. We must not have another year of inaction in the Conference. In the light of the deteriorating international security and disarmament environment, inaction is a luxury that we cannot afford to indulge in any longer.

In this regard, the Republic of Korea sincerely hopes that we will be able to make progress this year on a programme of work, which would allow us to immediately start negotiations. During the 2015 session, the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty adopted its final report, which contained a concrete recommendation on possible aspects that could contribute to a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Now, our task ahead is to leverage this momentum to produce a programme of work. My delegation looks forward to discussions that would lead to the adoption of the programme of work in the 2016 session. A sense of shared responsibility and a spirit of compromise are keys to success in such efforts.

Taking into account that the Conference serves as a forum for disarmament, including non-proliferation, my delegation is compelled to raise the issue of the fourth nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, on 6 January 2016, in the face of the international community’s serious warning. Furthermore, North Korea insisted that it would escalate its nuclear deterrence capabilities in both quality and quantity. We cannot but point out that such blatant action runs in direct contrast to the common goals and objective of the Conference.

North Korea is the only country to have conducted a nuclear weapons test in the twenty-first century, in spite of its obligations under United Nations Security Council resolutions. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has continued to strengthen its relevant nuclear and ballistic missile activities. This time, we expect the most robust and comprehensive Security Council resolutions to ensure that North Korea pays a

corresponding price for its irresponsible behaviour. The flagrant violation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of these Security Council resolutions is without a doubt a genuine threat to the peace and security of the international community as a whole, not just that of North-East Asia. The position of the Republic of Korea is simple and clear: we strongly condemn the nuclear test by North Korea and demand that North Korea abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions. Importantly, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must realize that it cannot have the status of being a nuclear-weapon State under any circumstance.

Sending a clear and unified message to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not possible without the extensive support of the international community. Along these lines, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the 91 countries and 10 international and regional organizations thus far which have demonstrated their strong support for my Government's position.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should listen carefully to the strong, widespread condemnation by the international community, as well as the voices of the members of the Conference. The pursuit of a nuclear capability is not now, nor will it ever be, the right path for a secure and prosperous country. Once again, the international community cannot accept the State of North Korea as a nuclear-weapon State. The Republic of Korea will accelerate cooperation with the international community, which has consistently expressed support for the denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In the end, we are urging in the strongest terms that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea realize this misconduct and promptly take the right decision of denuclearization in response to the strong and united calls from the international community.

The President: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Ambassador Rosemary McCarney.

Ms. McCarney (Canada): Mr. President, since I am taking the floor for the first time within the formal proceedings of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to acknowledge what a great honour and privilege it is to have been appointed the Permanent Representative of Canada to this body. Canada has sought to play a constructive role in the work of the Conference and its predecessors and continues to attach great importance to the work of this body. While the Conference's protracted stalemate on substance of work is a real concern, you can be assured of my commitment to support efforts to return the Conference to its role as the world's sole disarmament negotiating forum as mandated in 1978 by the first special session of the United Nations on disarmament.

I also congratulate you on your role as President of the Conference on Disarmament and I wish you every success. The grave threat posed to all countries by the proliferation and potential use of weapons of mass destruction, including by non-State actors, and the need for effective controls over these weapons systems, underlines the urgency for our actions. In this context, Canada views the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany (P5+1) and Iran — provided it is fully and verifiably implemented — as a positive contribution to global efforts on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. However, in contrast to this advancement, we strongly condemn the 6 January nuclear test by North Korea, which violates successive United Nations Security Council resolutions and undermines global security. Canada will not accept North Korea as a nuclear-weapon State, and we call on it to abandon its illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

In this climate, the impasse in the Conference is truly lamentable. Starting today, I hope to be part of a collective effort to reset the Conference's wayward compass and focus on the urgency of its mandate. This is our collective responsibility. Our differences must be resolved through negotiations and not procedural wrangling. We must make more efficient use of our time and resources, and finally, we must — we must — move beyond discussion and debate seemingly for its own sake. If the Conference continues to be unable to agree on a programme of work, my delegation predicts that the Conference's credibility will be irretrievably and irreparably damaged.

I may be proved wrong, but I choose to be optimistic that it is still possible for the Conference to adopt a balanced programme of work that would enable negotiations to begin on some issues, while allowing concrete discussions towards eventual negotiations to take place on others. For my delegation, the start of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices remains the most important element of a programme of work because it is ripe for negotiation.

Canada has long promoted the merits of such a treaty and has led practical attempts to identify and elaborate the key issues. My predecessor chaired the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts, which facilitated the most in-depth discussion on the elements of a legally binding, non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty. The Group's consensus-based report faithfully reflects the spectrum of views expressed by all its participants and clearly demonstrates that no substantive issues are preventing the immediate negotiation of this treaty. My delegation's resolve in pursuing treaty negotiations was further strengthened by the overwhelming support that States gave to our General Assembly resolution 70/39, entitled "Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices".

The Conference will not be the only United Nations-related body discussing fundamental disarmament issues in 2016. In the spirit of cooperation and as part of the genuine desire of Canada to try to advance disarmament discussions, Canada will also participate constructively in the Open-ended Working Group with the mandate to substantially address various measures and norms to establish a world without nuclear weapons. Ambassador Thongphakdi of Thailand, as Chair of the Open-ended Working Group, can count on the commitment of Canada to engage collaboratively in a fair and balanced dialogue on these issues.

(spoke in French)

Mr. President, Canada is resolved to prevent an arms race in space. Any legally binding instrument to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space will have to contain precise definitions, an appropriate legal framework and effective means of verification and must cover ground-based anti-satellite weapons. We do not believe that the draft Treaty for the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space meets these criteria in its current form. Implementing the recommendations contained in the consensus report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities offers much more realistic and viable prospects for the international community to promptly establish a code of conduct for space activities for the benefit of all nations.

(spoke in English)

The Conference has a distinguished history as a multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. It has helped to provide meaningful solutions to maintain and preserve international security, and it can assume this vital role again. However, as we have seen with respect to processes created to negotiate the Ottawa Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Arms Trade Treaty, it is no longer the only game in town. We

urgently need to bridge the gaps between our respective national and regional interests if we want to maintain the relevance of the Conference.

In this spirit, Canada stands ready to support a programme of work that includes proposing a new mandate for negotiations on a treaty on fissile materials for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive purposes. While Canada still believes that the Shannon mandate is the most appropriate basis on which to commence negotiations, we recognize this new proposal as an extremely significant compromise, and we are prepared to be flexible and to support it fully.

If Conference members are truly committed to returning this forum to productive work, it is our sincere hope that this approach will be reciprocated by all members. We would encourage you, Mr. President, to conduct informal consultations in order to advance such a promising new programme of work. I firmly believe that the goal of disarmament is achievable, if we work pragmatically, flexibly and constructively together. With that in mind, I look forward to working with all delegations to instil a new sense of purpose to the Conference and to contribute to the achievement of its essential mandate: the mandate to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now call on the representative of Germany, Ambassador Michael Biontino.

Mr. Biontino (Germany): Mr. President, at the outset, please allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during its 2016 session. This Conference is continually confronted with important and difficult questions in the field of disarmament and arms control, and we are confident that your able mediation will guide us safely through the discussions that lie before us. At this point, I would also like to welcome all the new colleagues to the Conference.

My special thanks go to the Presidents of last year's Conference session, and I am glad to note that the High Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kim Won-soo, and the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Michael Møller, are continuing to lend their valuable support for the cause of disarmament. Let me at this point as well welcome Ms. Soliman in her new position.

As the Conference now goes into its twentieth year of stalemate, we must exert even more concerted efforts in order to overcome the existing situation: new solutions have to be found without any prejudice. In this context, we must urgently improve the Conference's working methods — and we should at long last open the Conference to new members in order to improve its effectiveness.

As a result of the failure of this Conference to produce substantial results over the past years, we are often confronted with frustration and scepticism regarding its future. Thus, some reactions to the ongoing stalemate were — and still are — in fact calls to pursue the creation of substantial and permanent disarmament instruments outside the Conference. However, doing so may weaken this internationally acknowledged disarmament forum not only significantly, but also irrevocably — and that would also have a negative effect on the United Nations disarmament machinery as a whole.

On a somewhat more optimistic note, during the last month we have seen some remarkable developments in the field of security and disarmament policy. Let me first mention the “implementation day” (10 days ago) of the successful talks between France, Germany, the United Kingdom, China, the Russian Federation and the United States (E3 plus 3) and Iran; these are talks in which Germany took part and whose positive outcome gives reason for some hope in an otherwise aggrieved region of the world.

Let me also briefly mention the remarkable developments in the context of the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as the successful destruction of the officially declared Syrian chemical weapons. I remind you that the draft Chemical Weapons Convention was discussed and worked out in the Conference on Disarmament in 1992. This success notwithstanding, it is a reason for grave concern that Syrian declarations may fall short of the truth and that the Assad regime is still using chemicals as weapons. No less disconcerting is the news that the so-called Islamic State is also using chemical agents and seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

In spite of some of the successes mentioned, the overall security situation remains very problematic: ongoing conflicts in the Near and Middle East and the global threat posed by terrorist organizations are a daily reminder of this situation. The refugee crisis must be seen against this backdrop. It can only be managed if the international community cooperates in a spirit of solidarity.

Given the failure of this Conference to produce substantial results in the last years, we are confronted with scepticism, frustration and even cynicism. Therefore, progress towards a balanced programme of work as described at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament must be our common aim. During the past year, the Conference was in a position to discuss, substantively, some important issues — negative security assurances, a fissile material cut-off treaty, outer space and nuclear disarmament — even in the absence of a programme of work. We should build on these positive experiences in order to get concrete results over time. As Foreign Minister Steinmeier put it here last year, the Conference is a “laboratory of multilateralism”. We should take advantage of the enormous potential of this important forum. This implies that, while any State is entitled to raise objections during negotiations, it would appear that grounds on which it could block negotiations are far from evident. After all, in order to be bound by a treaty, the consent of the State has to be established first, which entails that no State can be pressured into joining a treaty. I am alluding here, obviously, to the project of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. Given the amount of time and energy already invested in this project, patience is running out here. And while we basically must preserve the integrity of this forum, in this specific case it would not appear inappropriate to look into options outside of the Conference if the stalemate continues.

On the occasion of the Conference’s first plenary meeting this session, I would like to briefly mention some other important disarmament topics. The fact that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference last year ended without a consensus document is highly regrettable, all the more so as consensus with regard to many topics was within reach. The NPT remains a landmark with regard to international non-proliferation and disarmament instruments, but also concerning the civilian use of nuclear materials. Germany would like to recall that the offer of a new disarmament round made by President Obama is still on the table. It is the most realistic proposal to make headway in line with article VI of the Treaty.

This year will mark the twentieth anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the last treaty that this Conference negotiated. The fourth nuclear test by North Korea is a stern reminder why work towards the Treaty’s entry into force should be high on our agenda. Germany, together with the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, strongly condemns the nuclear test conducted by North Korea on 6 January 2016; a statement on this specific topic will follow later on.

Technological innovations such as lethal autonomous weapons systems keep posing new challenges. Progress in programming towards autonomy, automation and unmanned delivery raises fundamental legal and ethical issues about future weapons systems that we need to address.

Likewise, cybersecurity is becoming an increasingly pressing issue. We are witnessing the use of cybercapabilities in ongoing international tensions and conflicts. Unfortunately, traditional instruments of arms control have little to no effect in this domain. Therefore, the General Assembly has mandated a group of governmental experts to explore existing and potential threats in the area of information security and to identify possible cooperative measures to address them. These include principles of responsible behaviour of States and confidence-building measures, but also issues of using information and communications technologies in conflict and the applicability of international law to their use. As a member of this group, Germany actively works on addressing these issues.

I would like to point up some core issues of the Conference that are of special importance. Striving to arrive at the long-term goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world is an extremely important task which must take in questions of security. Negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices are of high importance and should commence as soon as possible. The meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on this issue — in which Germany took part — were important stepping stones towards such a treaty. Germany will support advancing discussions with regard to future negotiations and push hard for tangible progress.

Negative security assurances still need our special attention. They are especially, but not only, in the interest of non-nuclear-weapon States. In our analysis, agreeing on a binding protocol on such assurances would not be that demanding, given that important work in this context has been carried out in the past on which one could build. Many, but by far not all, States are already enjoying firm assurances in the framework of nuclear-weapon-free zones. It would thus be truly a next logical step to work on this together.

The peaceful use of outer space is also in the interest of all nations, and an arms race there must be urgently avoided. In this context, transparency and confidence-building measures, including an international code of conduct for outer space activities, as a possible first step towards future arms control in space, should remain on our agenda. All nations must be aware that we must prevent space from becoming an area of conflict and a source of strategic instability. We should establish norms for responsible behaviour sooner rather than later, given the fact that today's world is dependent on a functioning infrastructure in outer space.

Let me conclude by underlining that the continuing stalemate of the Conference on Disarmament should be a serious concern to all of us. We call upon all Conference members: let us combine all our efforts to overcome the present deadlock and cooperate to make this world a more peaceful place.

The President: I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now call on the representative of Poland, Ambassador Stachanczyk.

Mr. Stachanczyk (Poland): First of all, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at its 2016 session.

We are gathered here at the Palais des Nations to launch today a new session of the Conference. Let me underline at the outset that, for Poland, the Conference on Disarmament is the main and indispensable forum for debate and negotiations on global disarmament issues. Its achievements in this vein are indisputable. Through the years, the Conference and its predecessors have proved how efficient it could be. Crucial disarmament conventions have been successfully negotiated, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation system, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and an important element in the further development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

It has been many years since this forum has successfully concluded its deliberations. We should not let it slide into reverse. Today, it is our common goal and responsibility to revive and bring the Conference back on a track of negotiations and substantive discussion. The question remains as to how to switch on this engine. As Nelson Mandela said, "It always seems impossible until it is done."

We come with different national positions. We have different backgrounds and life experiences. We can even differ in terms of ways and means. But we share the same goal and desire to make the world safer and more predictable. This is possible as long as we meet and discuss in an open and inclusive manner.

We need to negotiate and to concentrate on substantive work to build a pool of expertise and ideas to be used when circumstances allow. At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that, in recent years, we have witnessed events that contradict the spirit and letter of international commitments, challenging the international order as well as security and disarmament arrangements.

Let me mention just a few of those events. Long-standing conflict in Syria and the threat posed by the terrorist organizations operating under the name of ISIS have led to deterioration in the international security environment. Not far from the Polish border, a conflict exists that is characterized by the violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity and the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, as well as the constant engagement of Russian military personnel on Ukrainian soil and the lack of fulfilment of the Minsk agreement. And recently there was the nuclear test conducted by North Korea, which poses a threat to peace and security in East Asia.

Our concerns in this regard will be expressed by the German representative on behalf of the States members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. At this point, I would like to underline that the conduct of North Korea is a serious challenge to the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation commitment. The conflicts and acts indicated above put into question which direction international disarmament should head. They serve neither international peace nor law.

The 2015 NPT Review Conference, as well as tough discussions in the First Committee of the General Assembly, have shown us how important and difficult it is to make progress in disarmament in a substantial way without the risk of putting into question the achievement of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

On the other hand, the recent agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme is proof of what international society is capable of when acting together in good faith. We offer our full respect to every State and non-governmental organization which undertakes the disarmament initiative. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that every solution in the disarmament field should be in line with a comprehensively understood international security environment and strategic context. Certain mechanisms must be adopted and implemented in logical sequence in order to pave the way for progress in nuclear disarmament.

We consider a fissile material cut-off treaty to be the next logical step on the way to nuclear disarmament. It is also the most ripe for negotiations. A lot of work has been done so far, including the report of the Group of Governmental Experts, which was geographically well balanced. We can and should build on its conclusions and recommendations. While accepting that parameters and technical aspects, definitions, the verification system and legal arrangements will be subject to negotiation, what we need to do is to start discussing them.

Substantial outcomes cannot be achieved overnight. They need long negotiation and strategic patience on the part of all of us, but this patience is running out with every day that

this forum keeps on debating about procedures and not about substance. It is therefore high time for the Conference on Disarmament to wake up. I can assure you that as one of the six Presidents of this year's session, Poland will make every effort to revitalize this forum. We hope that together we will be able to break the stalemate and move on with substantive discussions on all the items on our agenda.

Poland will spare no effort to reach this goal. I call upon all of you to make progress and achieve this historic breakthrough.

The President: I thank the representative of Poland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now call upon the representative of Finland, Ambassador Päivi Kairamo.

Ms. Kairamo (Finland): First of all, let me congratulate you, Mr. Ambassador, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish you success in this important endeavour, and you can trust in the full support of my delegation. I also take this opportunity to thank the High Representative for presenting us today with the Secretary-General's message and the urgent appeal to this Conference to start long overdue negotiations. As has been rightly pointed out earlier, the Conference has been inactive for much too long.

Finland considers the Conference to be a unique disarmament negotiation forum that bears special responsibility not only in disarmament but also in broader terms of world peace and security. Finland therefore strongly condemns the announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it had conducted a nuclear explosive test. That represents a severe violation of the international obligations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including numerous resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. It is a further major violation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a serious breach of the international non-proliferation regime and of the nuclear test moratorium. Finland urges North Korea to refrain from additional actions that undermine the stability and security of the Korean Peninsula. North Korea must fully comply with its international obligations and abandon its nuclear programme. Finland urges North Korea to re-engage in a credible and meaningful dialogue with the international community, in particular in the framework of the Six-Party Talks aimed at verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner.

Let me highlight a recent positive development in the field of non-proliferation. Finland welcomes the announcement of "implementation day" on 16 January under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. This is a significant achievement and highlights the importance of effective multilateralism and international cooperation. Finland underlines that the full implementation of the Plan of Action is crucial to achieve international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme.

With pressing urgency, it is our responsibility to explore every avenue that could lead to substantive work in the Conference. A balanced and comprehensive programme of work, with a mandate to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, would be our priority. We should continue searching for solutions that would fulfil this goal. Finland welcomes the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on this topic and trusts that its elements can be utilized in the work of the Conference. We also welcome efforts aimed at taking discussions on such a treaty forward within the Conference and encourage other members to do the same.

We also support any other initiatives focusing on building bridges and exploring all possible means of thinking around the programme of work, with a view to building consensus that would allow substantive work to begin.

Mr. President, we stand ready to support your efforts and will continue consultations in whatever format necessary.

The President: I thank the representative of Finland for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now call upon the representative of Morocco, Ambassador Auajjar.

Mr. Auajjar (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, for my delegation it is an immense pleasure and honour to see a great and fraternal country, which is a leader on our continent, holding the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. The Kingdom of Morocco is confident that your extensive diplomatic experience and comprehensive understanding of disarmament issues will provide an impetus to the work of our Conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the process of consultations that you have engaged in and assure you of the full support of my delegation as you carry out your work. We would also like to express our gratitude to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Kim Won-soo, whose presence here today is proof of the importance that the Secretary-General of the United Nations personally places on the issue of disarmament. I wish to express thanks as well to Mr. Michael Møller, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and to all members of the secretariat for their valuable support. Allow me also to express my best wishes to the other Presidents of the Conference for the 2016 session, namely, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Poland and the Republic of Korea, and to assure them that they have our full support in carrying out their mandate.

The Kingdom of Morocco attaches great importance to the Conference as the sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations. However, the standstill in this forum and its inability to agree on a balanced and consensual programme of work to enable us to negotiate international instruments on the disarmament issues on our agenda remain sources of great concern for my delegation.

The shifting global strategic environment, the spread of terrorism and the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction should drive us to work harder to make progress in the areas of non-proliferation, arms control and the disarmament agenda. In a globalized world, the security of any given country or region is intimately linked, more than ever, to the security of the rest of the world. The Conference therefore must adopt an integrated, pragmatic approach to the topical international matters for which it has a negotiating mandate. If the Conference is to keep its leading role in the arena of international security and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we will need to work together in a practical and coordinated way. My delegation thus believes it is time to focus efforts on working collectively to revive the Conference, which risks becoming obsolete as the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament instruments.

However, this will not happen without a true show of genuine political will to overcome the Conference's 20-year deadlock, including efforts to find compromise solutions that will enable the Conference to remain relevant and preserve the spirit of its mandate. The delegation of Morocco therefore strongly urges the members of the Conference to set aside any predetermined positions and promptly agree on a programme of work as a step towards breaking the impasse and taking up the Conference's mandate again as the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which abides by all multilateral treaties concerning weapons of mass destruction and is committed to general and complete disarmament, particularly in the nuclear sphere, believes that our collective security remains dependent on non-proliferation and a commitment to disarmament. Possessing nuclear weapons or any weapon of mass destruction is no guarantee of real security and safety either regionally or internationally. On the contrary, it creates a genuine risk of proliferation and of such

weapons falling into the hands of hawkish non-State actors who lie outside any form of control. We must therefore work together to make real progress in disarmament and move beyond prepared speeches and predetermined positions.

The Kingdom of Morocco supports the establishment of denuclearized zones to protect the world from nuclear risks and therefore regrets that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference held in New York in May 2015 was not able to make a decision on establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction pursuant to the resolution adopted in 1995. My delegation believes that organizing an international conference on this matter would be a historic opportunity to launch a process to rid the region of weapons of mass destruction and to strengthen international security. At the same time, it would foster a climate of trust among the countries of the region and would open up new opportunities for cooperation and coexistence to the benefit of all countries in the region. I therefore reaffirm the unwavering support of my delegation for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and our support for all initiatives which aim to bring about the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

The Kingdom of Morocco remains convinced that multilateralism and international cooperation are the most effective response to all global challenges, including the threat of nuclear terrorism. Since the launch of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism in 2006, Morocco has consistently adopted a proactive approach and actively participates in all international efforts to promote the cause of disarmament and the fight against nuclear terrorism. It was in that spirit that Morocco and Spain, in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), organized a joint exercise from 27 to 29 October 2015 in Madrid — under the name “Gate to Africa” — on the secure maritime transport of a radioactive source from the port of Algeciras in Spain to the Tanger-Med cargo port in Morocco. This exercise, the first of its kind carried out with IAEA in the field of the transport of radioactive sources, aimed to evaluate and improve capacity in terms of coordination, agreement, crisis management and response to a radiological emergency triggered by a criminal or terrorist act. The Gate to Africa exercise, in which some 60 observers from IAEA member States took part, made a substantial contribution to strengthening the international nuclear security regime and to the work of the fourth Nuclear Security Summit, to be held in Washington in March and April 2016.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the strong desire of Morocco to see the Conference engage in substantive work as from the beginning of the 2016 session and rise to the expectations of the international community. The credibility and relevance of the Conference, not to mention its continued existence, are at stake.

The President: I thank the representative of Morocco for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now call upon the representative of Spain, Ambassador Julio Herráiz España.

Mr. Herráiz España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I am very pleased to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of the full support of my delegation. I would also like to say that Spain fully endorses the statement that the European Union will be making subsequently.

As the Conference begins its new session this year, it again faces the challenge of how to break through the protracted impasse in its negotiations. All of us present here have a duty to make a special effort and adopt a constructive approach that will allow us to overcome this hurdle. This year again, we have heard words of advice and guidance from the Secretary-General of the United Nations urging us to make that happen. Faced with this

urgent need to take action, we should not allow ourselves to give up or let scepticism take over.

We are convinced that the intricate strategic and security context of today's world stands to benefit from a forum such as the Conference, where different viewpoints can continue to be discussed, thereby strengthening transparency and mutual trust with a view to disarmament. Although we are fully aware that the Conference has a clear mandate to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties and not to simply host debates, we must not forget the importance of ongoing, formal dialogue in overcoming distrust and any hurdles there may be.

We should continue our efforts to adopt a programme of work, advancing patiently and realistically to identify the items ripest for moving forward with negotiations. My delegation believes that this could be done by setting up a new informal working group to draft a programme of work and take forward the work done during the 2015 session.

We believe as well that it is desirable — bearing in mind the importance of dialogue as we just mentioned — to continue with informal discussions on the core agenda items and also to establish an informal group on enhancing the Conference's working methods, while maintaining full respect for the consensus rule. It would also be important to take steps to expand the membership by a reasonable number and to agree on principles for enabling civil society to participate in our work to a greater extent.

My delegation is of the view that negotiating a treaty banning fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is currently the option that is the ripest in technical and political terms for garnering a consensus on the basis of which the Conference could assume its mandated role in the disarmament framework. The Conference already possesses a wide range of working documents, drafts, proposals and reports describing different modalities and formats for a possible treaty on fissile material.

Spain supports all initiatives which, in a constructive and flexible manner, might offer a new, more creative approach to reaching a consensus and thus enable real, substantive progress on this issue. In that connection, we are aware that other multilateral initiatives are preparing to address in 2016 some fundamental issues concerning nuclear disarmament, including possible legal instruments.

My delegation wishes to underscore the importance of operating on a consensus basis in all discussions and all work relating to such sensitive issues in the international sphere, as that provides realistic guarantees of effective implementation in pursuit of a safer and more stable world.

We reiterate our firm conviction that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and a balanced implementation of its three pillars provide the underpinning for a multilateral regime that fosters international stability, security and peace. We must renew our efforts to honour all the commitments assumed at the various NPT review conferences, in particular those contained in the 2010 action plan.

Our ultimate objective is to attain a world free of nuclear weapons through a set of broad, pragmatic and progressive disarmament measures. I would also like to reiterate our strong desire to see a conference organized in the near future on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

We welcome the historic agreement reached last July on the nuclear situation in Iran and the achievement of "implementation day" on 16 January this year under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Prior to that date, Spain had presided over the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006), which has now been disbanded, and Spain has been appointed as the facilitator with regard to compliance with the functions entrusted to the Security Council pursuant to Council resolution 2231 (2015).

Spain reiterates its strong condemnation of the nuclear test carried out by North Korea on 6 January this year: it poses a serious threat to international peace and security and the stability of the Korean Peninsula and is in violation of Security Council resolutions. My country, as the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, wishes to express its firm resolve to collaborate with the international community to respond decisively to this unacceptable violation of Security Council resolutions.

We further wish to reiterate the importance of a rapid entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and call on all States to ratify it, especially those listed in annex 2 to the Treaty.

I would like to finish, Mr. President, by thanking the Ambassador of Morocco for mentioning the important exercise recently carried out jointly with Spain in the waters of the Strait of Gibraltar. In line with its commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation and as the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), Spain will continue in 2016 to pursue the comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) to enhance its effectiveness in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The President: I thank the representative of Spain for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now call upon the representative of Australia, Ambassador John Quinn.

Mr. Quinn (Australia): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and on the proactive and innovative manner in which you are conducting your presidency. Your assumption of this office is particularly pleasing given your country's significant engagement on disarmament, including as a fellow member of the cross-regional Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. You can be assured of my support and that of my delegation as we endeavour to get the Conference back on track.

I would also like to acknowledge the ongoing personal commitment of the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Kim Won-soo, as well as the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Michael Möller, to progress the Conference, and the valuable work of their very capable team in the secretariat. We wish them well in 2016 and offer them our full support in their important roles.

I would also, of course, like to extend my greetings to my colleague Ambassadors and other delegates, including those new arrivals who will be participating in the Conference for the first time. One of the hallmarks of the Conference is that we are able to work in such a collegiate and constructive way, even when we have differences. Such differences must be expected as the Conference's agenda engages our respective national security interests and perspectives.

Australia is determined to see the Conference on Disarmament return to work and fulfil its mandate to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties. It is for this reason that we will continue to support efforts to adopt and implement a meaningful and balanced programme of work. We pledge to work closely with you, Mr. President, in this endeavour, but also with the session's other Presidents this year — Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Poland and the Republic of Korea — and the Conference membership more generally.

In our view, it is vital that we ensure that the work of the Conference remains relevant to current international security challenges and opportunities. Against this background, I would like to underline the Australian Government's strong condemnation of the nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 6 January in direct violation of four United Nations Security Council resolutions. Foreign Minister Julie

Bishop of Australia joined her counterparts from Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea and Turkey (the MIKTA group) in issuing a joint statement on this subject on 10 January. The full text of this statement will be included in the submitted official version of my intervention today. Australia also joined other States members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative in a similar joint statement of concern.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea needs to realize that the international community is united in its opposition to such behaviour and regards such nuclear tests as a direct threat to critical international disarmament and non-proliferation norms. To be clear, we see the nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as not just undermining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but also posing a direct challenge to the crucial international norm against testing created by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and reinforced by various actions taken pursuant to this key instrument.

At the same time, we should also not close our minds to the opportunities that present themselves outside of this chamber. The recent implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreement with Iran is a commendable example of diplomacy making a significant contribution to making the world a more peaceful and secure place.

We would like to bring that spirit of entente and compromise into the Conference chamber to enable us to resume the mandate that the Conference was created to discharge.

We are only too aware of the problems that the Conference has faced in adopting and implementing a programme of work. To state the obvious, the impasse in the Conference is a consequence of political and security realities outside this chamber.

There is no doubt that the future of the Conference remains in the balance, particularly in the context of other discussions that will be proceeding outside of this chamber, notably the forthcoming Open-ended Working Group. The United Nations Secretary-General's annual message to the Conference, delivered today, should serve as a wake-up call for us all. As noted in the Secretary-General's address delivered by the Acting High Representative, Mr. Kim, without concrete action to resolve the impasse, this Conference risks becoming completely marginalized.

Let me take up one priority aspect of the Conference's agenda. Australia has long advocated that the immediate focus of the Conference should be on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). For Australia, this is the next logical step in the nuclear disarmament process. Fissile material is the raw material for nuclear weapons. Stopping the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes is fundamental to nuclear arms control. We can never reach our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons — and we cannot maintain such a world — without having negotiated stringent controls relating to production of fissile materials.

I had the privilege of being a member of the Group of Governmental Experts on an FMCT in 2014 and 2015. The Group's consensus report reflected faithfully the intensive, substantive and productive discussions that took place under the able leadership of the Canadian Ambassador to the Conference at the time, Elissa Golberg. It was clear from our discussions that there is no technical barrier that would prevent the Conference commencing negotiations on an FMCT without delay. So, the Conference has an important opportunity to grasp: to sustain this forward momentum and commence FMCT negotiations without further delay.

In this respect, we would encourage any fresh approach to initiating negotiations on an FMCT that could navigate around the current roadblocks. If a way can be found that does not prejudice any country's national position and yet moves us away from the polarization that has emerged around the use of the term "the Shannon mandate", we would

be interested to explore such an option. We encourage all delegations to consider this as a historic opportunity for us to proceed from where we left off with document CD/1864 in 2009.

In conclusion, let me say that if we do not seize this opportunity, as observed by the Secretary-General, the Conference on Disarmament as the single standing negotiating forum for multilateral disarmament will be even further marginalized.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now call upon the representative of Japan, Ambassador Toshio Sano.

Mr. Sano (Japan): Allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Emuze, on the assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during its 2016 session; I assure you of my delegation's full support as you lead the Conference. I would also like to thank Mr. Kim Won-soo, the Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for the important remarks on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General. We also commend Mr. Michael Møller, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and his team for their support to the Conference.

At the outset, I would like to associate myself with the joint statement of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, which was already circulated and will be introduced later by the German Ambassador, regarding the nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 6 January. The Japan Meteorological Agency detected seismic waves originating from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with a wave pattern which differs from those usually seen in natural earthquakes. This was followed by an announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it had conducted what they claim to be a hydrogen bomb test. Having considered these developments comprehensively, the Government of Japan has come to the conclusion that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea conducted its fourth nuclear test, despite the repeated calls by the international community to fully comply with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

This nuclear test is totally unacceptable for Japan, as it constitutes a grave threat to my country's security and seriously undermines the peace and security of North-East Asia as well as the international community, when considered together with the enhancement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its ballistic missile capability.

This nuclear test is a clear violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. In addition, it represents a grave challenge not only to the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime centred around the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty but also to the effort to accelerate the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It also violates the Japan-Democratic People's Republic of Korea Pyongyang Declaration as well as the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks of September 2005, and goes against the efforts to resolve various issues through dialogue. Thus, Japan lodges a serious protest against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and strongly condemns its nuclear test. Japan reiterates its strong demand for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to immediately and fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions.

With regard to this year's Conference session, member States should have a sense of urgency to move forward and end the nearly two decades of stalemate. This year, the Open-ended Working Group established by General Assembly resolution 70/33 will hold several meetings in Geneva. This is a wake-up call from the international community that the Conference should fulfil its mandate and not pursue business as usual.

In this context, Japan believes that Conference members should exhaust their efforts with a sense of urgency but allow for sufficient time to agree on a programme of work at an

early stage. Every core issue of the Conference has its own role and value. In our view, the Conference should immediately commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty which aims at capping quantity by banning production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons. Such a treaty is the next logical building block towards the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons.

In closing, Japan is fully committed to achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and with this in mind we intend to continue to steadily promote practical steps and effective measures. We look forward to working with member States.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of France, Ambassador Alice Guitton.

Ms. Guitton (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by warmly congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wishing you every success in carrying out your duties. You may be assured that my delegation will fully support you in this regard.

Looking back at 2015, we see it was a year of many contrasts. It is a fact that our work towards disarmament is now framed by a more unpredictable and complex strategic and security environment. Against such a backdrop, France remains fully committed to addressing the multiple threats surrounding us and helping to resolve crises that increasingly affect us all.

It is only through coherent efforts aimed at dissipating international tensions, ensuring unwavering respect for international law and defending the need for dialogue and cooperation at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels that we can give credibility to our common objectives in the disarmament sphere. We believe that such efforts are essential to ushering in a safer world for everyone. They should also serve as the common foundation for our joint work this year to overcome the divisions and deadlocks which have persisted for too long in the different disarmament forums.

Mr. President, progress is possible. Although it is deeply regrettable that 2015 saw an unsuccessful outcome to the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), some significant progress was also made. The agreement reached by the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany with Iran on 14 July 2015 was a decisive step in progressively rebuilding the international community's confidence in the Iranian nuclear programme. France welcomes the commencement of full implementation of the nuclear agreement with Iran, verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Through its determined and constructive stance, France was able to make a significant contribution to the conclusion of that agreement. We will remain vigilant to ensure that it is strictly complied with and implemented.

The year 2015 also saw the adoption of Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), whereby an investigative mechanism was set up to establish responsibility concerning the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and resolution 2254 (2015), on a road map for settling the conflict in Syria. However, the situation continues to give cause for concern. Despite condemnation by the international community and the elimination of the chemical programme as announced by Damascus, repeated chemical attacks were launched in 2014 and 2015. It now falls to the investigative mechanism to identify those responsible and fully uncover the situation of chemical attacks in Syria, so that such attacks may be definitively ceased and the perpetrators held accountable. Complete dismantlement is the best way to prevent the re-emergence of a chemical programme in Damascus.

Turning to another point, I would briefly like to highlight the important success — in my country's view — of the first Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty,

held in Cancun, Mexico, and the increasing interest shown by numerous delegations in moving forward with our deliberations on lethal autonomous weapons systems. Please be assured that France is fully committed to following up on these promising avenues.

Despite the tense strategic climate, we must stand ready to tackle the numerous challenges awaiting us this year. The first days of 2016 reminded us of the importance of remaining firm and vigilant in the face of the risk of nuclear proliferation. The nuclear test carried out by North Korea on 6 January was in complete violation of numerous Security Council resolutions. France condemns this test in the strongest of terms and calls on North Korea to immediately abide by its international obligations and to undertake the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of its nuclear and ballistic programmes. We also call on North Korea to unconditionally refrain from any action that would risk heightening the tension on the Korean Peninsula and jeopardizing international peace and security.

In the nuclear disarmament sphere, there is nothing to be gained from the increasing polarization in our discussions each year or from the bypassing of established disarmament forums. On the contrary, to achieve a safer world for all and create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, we must make a concerted effort to work together in a spirit of shared responsibility and take into account the concerns of all. France remains convinced that the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral forum for universal disarmament treaty negotiations, is the legitimate venue for substantive and pragmatic progress to take place. In this regard, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the launching of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate it contains continue to be the top two priorities for France. It was with the achievement of these goals in mind that my country took an active role in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in 2015; it welcomed the adoption of the Group's report by consensus; and it presented a draft treaty to its partners.

We hope that the work commencing today in the Conference will capture and sustain the momentum created by these important contributions. In accordance with the action plan adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty is the next logical step on the path to nuclear disarmament. We must do everything possible to move ahead in this direction. The technical discussions which took place in this Conference in 2015, under the schedule of activities, confirmed the readiness for such a draft treaty.

With regard to conventional weapons, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Review Conference may decide on a way forward for our deliberations on lethal autonomous weapons systems; those deliberations were launched in 2013 on the initiative of France. We believe that the issue of improvised explosive devices, which claim too many victims each year, should be another major focus. The year 2016 will be an important year as well for the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, which is a unique agreement on responsibility and partnership between exporters and importers. France will continue to act decisively, in line with its initial commitments, to promote the universalization and full implementation of this international instrument, which stands out as a major success story of recent years.

Similarly, whether in the framework of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms, or of the International Tracing Instrument, or in other forums, we should seek out new opportunities to make progress in combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, especially against the risk of such weapons falling into the hands of terrorist groups.

The year 2016 will also see the holding of the Biological Weapons Convention Review Conference. This is a crucial event in my delegation's opinion, and we must prepare well for it. In particular, we should strengthen the implementation of article VII and work in the area of science and technology, without precluding the exploration of innovative working methods such as peer review, as suggested by my country.

I would also like to say something on the important topic of outer space, which we all know will present major challenges in the future. We therefore feel that priority should be given to implementing credible and effective transparency and confidence-building measures to safeguard the peaceful use of outer space for the benefit of all.

Mr. President, you face the difficult task of preparing and presenting to us a programme of work. I know that you will spare no effort in this complex exercise in order to extricate the Conference from the situation it has been in for much too long. It is more urgent than ever that the Conference return to its initial mandate, taking into account the developments and achievements of recent years. The Conference carried out work in 2015 through an informal working group and under the schedule of activities. This work and these discussions have made a significant contribution, which should enable us to make realistic and ground-breaking progress in 2016.

The President: I thank the representative of France for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, Ambassador Michael Biontino.

Mr. Biontino (Germany): I have the honour to deliver a joint statement of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative: Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

The Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) strongly condemns the nuclear test conducted by North Korea on 6 January 2016.

The nuclear test by North Korea is a clear violation of relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions as well as the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, and represents a grave challenge to the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime centred on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

This test is another reminder of the urgency of further strengthening the international framework for disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the effective implementation of the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

This nuclear test seriously undermines the peace and security of North-East Asia as well as the international community, particularly given the efforts by North Korea to enhance its ballistic missile capability, which could serve as a means to deliver weapons of mass destruction.

As NPDI has repeatedly done on previous occasions, we strongly urge North Korea to refrain from conducting further provocative actions including, among others, nuclear tests or ballistic missile launches. NPDI urges North Korea to fully comply with its obligations under Security Council resolutions and the commitments under the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, to return to compliance with its International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement and the NPT, to abandon all nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, and to cease all nuclear activities immediately.

The President: I thank the representative of Germany for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Italy, Ambassador Vinicio Mati.

Mr. Mati (Italy): Mr. President, allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the 2016 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation for productive involvement in this year's work. I would also like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for conveying the United Nations Secretary-General's message, and for his statement, which we strongly welcome.

Italy firmly believes that multilateralism and international cooperation are crucial to effective and long-term results in disarmament and non-proliferation. The year 2015 presented two landmark successes in this field: the agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between France, Germany, the United Kingdom, China, the Russian Federation and the United States (E3+3) and Iran, with its "implementation day" on 16 January 2016; and the successful conclusion of the first Conference of the States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty.

Both achievements show that multilateralism and international cooperation have an important role to play in disarmament and non-proliferation. In line with this, Italy will continue to be actively engaged in all the relevant forums, particularly the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference was established as the sole multilateral body to negotiate disarmament treaties, and in the past it has fulfilled this role very successfully, leading to the adoption of legally binding instruments that are central to the preservation of international peace and security.

Today, with a deadlock of almost two decades and in the face of the increasing tendency to take disarmament negotiations outside the Conference, we fear that its relevance may be in danger. In our view, the Conference remains a cornerstone of the multilateral disarmament machinery: preserving its primary role in promoting substantive negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation and overcoming its current deadlock therefore remain paramount.

Last year, the Conference did not agree on a negotiating mandate. Nonetheless, our activities were intense and, in our view, very useful, and we look forward to continuing to focus on these positive elements as we approach this forthcoming session.

We continue to support efforts to reach agreement on a programme of work. We consider the work conducted on this issue in 2015 to be valuable and believe that we should build upon it in the current session. In this regard, let me once again thank Ambassador Kairamo of Finland for her endeavours to lead the Conference to a consensus outcome on this issue.

Italy has consistently voiced its strong support for the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

We condemn in the strongest terms the nuclear test recently announced by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This test constitutes a serious violation of several United Nations Security Council resolutions, of the obligations of North Korea under the NPT and of the de facto international norm of a moratorium on nuclear tests. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should return at an early date to the NPT and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and should abandon all nuclear weapons and nuclear programmes as well as other existing weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

The Conference on Disarmament also has a key role to play in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, the early commencement of negotiations within the Conference on a treaty dealing with fissile materials is our clear priority. We believe that the substantive and constructive discussions that we held last year on this issue should be built upon, and we welcome any creative and flexible approaches leading to the start of negotiations without preconditions.

We also believe that the 2015 report of the Group of Governmental Experts continues to represent a constructive contribution to the ongoing debate and to future negotiations. Based on an impartial, in-depth and open approach, the report reflects the various positions that were voiced and presents all options on the table, thus constituting a useful and valuable resource for negotiators of a future treaty.

While nuclear disarmament and negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty are a priority for us, we are ready to engage in productive work on all the items on the Conference's agenda. Italy is also open to continuing discussions on the Conference's methods of work and identifying the most appropriate framework for this debate.

In this regard, we are keen to discuss ways in which the Conference could usefully interact more with civil society. We greatly appreciated the Conference on Disarmament/civil society forum held last year, and we look forward to further similar opportunities.

The President: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now call upon the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Cor van der Kwast.

Mr. Van der Kwast (Netherlands): Mr. President, please allow me first to congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament this year. As one of the Presidents last year, I fully realize the challenging task you are facing. Let me underline that you have the full confidence of my delegation in making your presidency a success. We will support you in any way we can.

Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the High Representative, Mr. Kim, to the Conference and thank him for the message he delivered today on behalf of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. Furthermore, I would like to warmly welcome Mary Soliman to the disarmament family in Geneva. The position of the head of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs has been vacant for too long, although Marco Kalbusch and his team have done an excellent job over the past year.

We see this new year in the Conference as a chance and an opportunity for all of us to get the Conference back to what it is supposed to do, that is, negotiate disarmament treaties. In our view, the Conference — with all its flaws — is still the best vehicle we have to deal with all the issues on the agenda we have just adopted. We strongly believe that we need to keep on trying and to keep searching for a collective way forward. Making progress requires vision, patience, perseverance and, above all, hard work. We cannot afford to wait for political will to appear: we need to help create it.

The realization that something needs to happen seems to be growing. Looking back at last year, we had a good, in-depth discussion on all core issues. Under the Finnish presidency, the informal working group produced a report, which was adopted by consensus, on ways forward for the Conference. Under the Netherlands presidency, we also had a frank and open discussion on possible ways forward for the Conference, which led to a number of ideas which we summarized in document CD/2035.

Let me be clear: the mandate of the Conference is indeed to negotiate, not to discuss. But in the absence of agreement on the way forward, in our view discussions are an

important means to search for common ground to get the Conference to the eventual start of negotiations.

Our main priority remains the immediate start of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices (FMCT). Our discussions last year on an FMCT, particularly in the framework of the Group of Governmental Experts, once again showed that this topic is ripe for negotiations. The Group played and is playing an important role in shaping our understanding of this future treaty. The Group's final report should give us input to continue our discussions on this topic and, hopefully, will lead to negotiations in the not-too-distant future. In this regard, we do welcome current proposals for a flexible mandate on this issue.

Mr. President, we would like to encourage you to examine, via informal consultations, if a more flexible mandate on an FMCT can get us to a programme of work. We would like to use this opportunity to call upon all delegations to show maximum flexibility in this regard.

In our view, there are two more issues that deserve our attention in the coming weeks and months. Last year, we were very close to adopting a decision on appointing a special coordinator to look into the working methods of the Conference. For several years now, many delegations have underlined the need to look again at the working methods, in particular with a view to discussing and removing barriers that unnecessarily stand in the way of the start of negotiations. We would like to encourage this year's six Presidents to look again at this issue and to examine if a decision on a review of the working methods can be adopted this year.

Enlargement of the Conference is the other issue that deserves our serious consideration this year. Last year, Latvia submitted, on behalf of the informal group of observer States, a working paper to the Conference in which member States were requested to convene a formal discussion on enlargement in 2016 on the basis of some concrete questions posed in that paper. We believe the Conference should seriously consider this request. We need to see how we can identify possible steps that make future enlargement possible. A large group of serious countries deserves an answer to their question.

Deplorably, the year 2016 commenced with a fourth nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Netherlands strongly condemns this dangerous provocation and has expressed its disapproval both bilaterally and in various multilateral forums. In that regard, we fully align ourselves with the statement delivered by Germany on behalf of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative and the statements made by the European Union.

The nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea threatens regional and international security and further isolates the regime. Moreover, it is a serious violation of relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks. Therefore, we support a strong reaction from the international community, including through a new Security Council resolution, to further restrict the nuclear capacities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to send a strong signal that its behaviour is unacceptable.

We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from further provocation, especially nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches. Moreover, the regime should fully comply with its aforementioned international obligations, implement the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and submit all its installations to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. Additionally, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay.

In its own interest, the regime should realize that the provocative path it has currently chosen does not encourage political progress or economic cooperation. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should therefore immediately cease its irresponsible actions and, instead, seek international rapprochement through dialogue.

The year 2016 will be a year full of activity. In addition to the work of the Conference, we have a challenging year ahead with the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention review, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons review, the Arms Trade Treaty and, in our case, the presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. In addition, there is the Open-ended Working Group on taking forward nuclear disarmament; we will engage in that Working Group. There is never a dull moment in disarmament. We believe progress is needed and, indeed, is possible, if we all show flexibility and work for the greater good rather than only our national priorities. We stand ready to do our share to get the Conference back to work.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Tehmina Janjua.

Ms. Janjua (Pakistan): Mr. President, I extend warm congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. We are pleased to be working with you as one of the Conference's six Presidents for 2016 and look forward to a fruitful and substantive Conference session this year.

We appreciate the excellent manner in which the outgoing President, Ambassador Higginson of New Zealand, conducted the work of the Conference, including on the finalization of the Conference's report and the consensus adoption of the General Assembly resolution on the report.

We welcome Mr. Kim Won-soo, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, here today. I would also like to thank Mr. Michael Møller, the Secretary-General of the Conference, and his staff, including Mr. Marco Kalbusch, for the excellent secretarial support provided to the Conference. We would also like to welcome the Conference's new Acting Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Mary Soliman, and wish her all the best as she takes up her new post.

I am taking the floor today for the first time as the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations and other international organizations based in Geneva and as Ambassador to the Conference. I consider it an honour to represent my country in the Conference and look forward to working with all fellow members of the Conference in the years ahead.

Pakistan attaches very high importance to the work of the Conference and considers it to be a unique and unparalleled forum. As the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, it is an integral and vital part of the United Nations disarmament machinery that needs to be preserved and strengthened.

Lately, the Conference has been the target of some misguided criticism. We understand and share the frustration emanating from the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament — the *raison d'être* of the Conference — which is a direct cause for most of the criticism. We, however, realize that the Conference does not operate in a vacuum. It is a reflection of the prevailing strategic realities. Simply condemning the Conference, or trying to find ways around it, only amounts to addressing the symptoms without tackling the root causes.

The challenges facing the international disarmament agenda and machinery are neither exclusive to the Conference nor new. Other parts of the disarmament machinery

confront similar difficulties. The United Nations Disarmament Commission has not been able to agree on any recommendations for more than a decade and a half.

As long as the noble quest for attaining equal and undiminished security for all States is trumped by hegemonic designs at the regional and global levels, real headway will continue to elude us. Politically motivated, discriminatory revisionism of the global nuclear order will continue to stand in the way of genuine progress. We have to reconcile with the reality that discriminatory approaches and discriminatory treaties are a thing of the past and are doomed to fail in the contemporary environment. It is highly unrealistic to aspire for absolute security and unrestrained freedom of action for oneself, while expecting others to compromise on their peaceful existence by circumscribing their legitimate security interests.

It is only in the Conference that all militarily significant States participate on an equal footing and are able to protect their vital security interests under the consensus rule. The progress might be slow, and results few and far between, but the panacea for revitalizing the global disarmament agenda lies neither in abandoning the Conference nor in the pursuit of inequitable treaties that apply disproportionately to one or two States only. A real breakthrough can only be achieved by exercising genuine political will to cooperatively advance the shared goals of international peace and security and of disarmament on a non-discriminatory and equitable basis. Progress in the Conference would follow automatically.

Unfortunately, the situation in the Conference today is such that there is no consensus on the commencement of negotiations on any issue on the Conference's agenda. In recent years, some States have taken it upon themselves to shift the goalposts in terms of international security priorities. Their efforts to project a fissile material cut-off treaty as the "new" priority and the only "ripe" issue contradict ground realities. The fact is that, for a vast majority of States, nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority on the international security agenda. Despite equivocation by some nuclear-weapon States, the sheer number of General Assembly resolutions on this issue over decades speaks for itself.

Among the four core issues, while the vast majority supports substantive work on the overripe issues of nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, certain Powers are only prepared to advance a partial non-proliferation measure in the Conference in the form of a fissile material cut-off treaty. In order to retain their respective strategic advantages, they are not willing to include existing stocks of fissile material in the treaty's negotiating mandate. A treaty that does not address the asymmetry in fissile material stocks, while being completely cost-free for these Powers, would adversely affect the vital security interests of Pakistan. Pakistan does not have any room for entertaining any ambiguities on this account. We need clarity.

Our working paper on elements of a fissile material treaty, which outlines concrete proposals for dealing with existing stocks and is contained in document CD/2036 of 21 August 2015, remains on the table.

While negotiations in the Conference have been stymied for one reason or the other, the Conference has also been prevented from carrying out substantive discussions on the core issues. Furthermore, the Conference has also been denied the opportunity to discuss new issues, beyond the four core issues, that are of direct concern to international peace and security, such as cybersecurity, new types of destabilizing weapons systems and lethal autonomous weapons systems.

As witnessed during the last two sessions of the Conference in 2014 and 2015, informal in-depth discussions held under the Conference's schedule of activities were of great value and substance. We see no reason why such discussions cannot take place in a formal setting, on all agenda items, allowing the possibility to raise and discuss contemporary issues outside the four core issues as well. In case formal discussions are not

possible, a schedule of activities providing for informal discussions on all agenda items would be highly useful and must be pursued. We seek your leadership in this regard.

In addition to the schedule of activities, we also saw merit in the informal working group mandated to produce a programme of work during the last three Conference sessions. It allowed the opportunity for all States to openly discuss the various options and to arrive at an acceptable compromise in a transparent manner. The group has not been able to achieve any big breakthrough, but the consensus adoption of its report last year was a significant achievement. It was a tribute to the dedication and diplomatic skills of the group's last Chair, Ambassador Kairamo of Finland. We need to build on that success and explore further incremental progress through the re-establishment of the informal working group with a similar mandate again this year.

We acknowledge and recognize the responsibility of the Conference President, in accordance with rule 29 of the rules of procedure, to draw up a programme of work for consideration and adoption by the Conference. But we also recognize the daunting nature of this task and therefore feel that, for the time being, this responsibility can be delegated to the informal working group to search for a consensus-based formula.

Such a dual-track approach, whereby the Conference is engaged in formal or informal discussions on all agenda items, coupled with parallel efforts to search for a consensus-based programme of work, not only offers the best prospects for progress but is also the best manner for utilizing the available time productively.

Let me hasten to emphasize that my delegation is only promoting this so-called dual-track approach as a practical and pragmatic step. This is notwithstanding our readiness to join negotiations in the Conference on nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as well as on other issues outside the four core issues, such as cybersecurity, new types of destabilizing weapons systems and lethal autonomous weapons systems.

We also stand ready to join efforts in the Conference for arriving at a new negotiating mandate for a fissile material treaty (FMT) that addresses the asymmetry in fissile material stocks and contributes to the goals of both disarmament and non-proliferation. The proposal that has been recently put forward by one member State for a revised FMT negotiating mandate, regrettably, does not meet these conditions and is therefore not acceptable to my delegation.

Mr. President, I would like to underscore that you will always find my delegation as an active and constructive participant in the work of the Conference. Despite all our frustrations and disappointments, we, collectively, simply cannot give up on the Conference. The lure of duplicating the Conference's work in some other forum outside the Conference with the aim of seeking progress on a non-consensual basis might seem to be an attractive shortcut, but will eventually prove to be a mirage. It will forever lack the legitimacy that is accorded to a product of the Conference. The highly ill-conceived Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty that will never be able to get such an endorsement is a case in point. We have made our position very clear in this regard in many other forums.

The exclusion or non-participation of key stakeholders that are directly affected by an arms control, non-proliferation or disarmament-related process seriously undermines such processes. However painstaking and time-consuming, there is no shortcut to building consensus-based, cooperative and non-discriminatory approaches that lead to equal and undiminished security for all.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Matthew Rowland.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Mr. President, let me congratulate you on the assumption of your role and assure you of my delegation's full support.

The United Kingdom joins other States in condemning in the strongest terms the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 6 January. Such testing is a clear violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions and seriously threatens regional and international security. We strongly support the Security Council's swift and robust condemnation of this nuclear test in its press statement of 6 January.

As our Foreign Secretary has made clear, we are working with other Security Council members to ensure that the international community responds urgently and robustly, including immediate work on further significant measures.

We continue to urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to credible and authentic multilateral talks on its nuclear programme, to abide by its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to permit full access by the International Atomic Energy Agency. We will continue to work closely with our allies and partners to address the threat that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea poses to international peace and security, including by pressing for rigorous enforcement of Security Council resolutions by all United Nations Member States.

Such testing as conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has become an anomaly carried out against an international norm. That norm had its roots in this very institution, in fact in this very chamber. It was here that the components of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty were identified, elaborated and agreed upon. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, though provisional, continues to demonstrate the collective will that led to the agreement of the Treaty 20 years ago.

The Organization has been built and maintained by all of the member States, ratifiers and non-ratifiers alike, through capacity-building or participation in technical work on the verification regime's technologies. This includes experts from countries as diverse as Iran and Israel, the United States and Russia, all working together on a collective goal to the benefit of everyone.

The Organization has a truly global monitoring presence that is able to do something no single country could: collect and analyse data from stations all around the world.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was this institution's last significant output. But that was 20 years ago, and 20 years is a long time for an organization to exist without delivering on its mandate. For the United Kingdom, the priority at the Conference has been and continues to be the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT): a treaty to stop the quantitative increase in the amount of material from which nuclear weapons are made, just as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty prevents the explosive testing that facilitates the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons.

We see an FMCT as the next logical step whatever one's preferred route to disarmament. The negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty here within this body was only achieved through levels of creativity from our predecessors that led to innovation in the Conference's working methods. We, too, need to strive for such creativity and be open to innovation.

Without losing sight of the priority that we place on an FMCT, we are willing to consider innovative approaches to getting the Conference back to work. We are pleased to have acted as coordinator for the informal discussions on prevention of an arms race in

outer space during 2014 and 2015. There may be merit in continuing those particular discussions, though we feel that we could — and should — be more ambitious so early in our new session.

We are thinking hard about what format ambition could take — a form that would bring back to the Conference the shared sense of purpose that enabled our predecessors to produce the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — on a shared understanding that collectively we can achieve a level of security unattainable when acting alone. The United Kingdom is far from giving up on the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of Romania, Ambassador Adrian Vierita.

Mr. Vierita (Romania): Mr. President, thank you for your kind words of welcome at the beginning of the meeting. Since this is my first time in attendance at the Conference on Disarmament, allow me to express both my honour and satisfaction at the opportunity to address this unique forum.

Mr. President, I join my colleagues in congratulating you on the assumption of the current presidency and pledge the full support of Romania for your work to the benefit of the Conference. I wish all the Presidents of this session every success in the endeavour to advance the work of the Conference this year.

Bearing in mind that we gather in Geneva at each annual session to reconfirm our commitment to the core purpose of the Conference, which is to negotiate solutions for multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament, the Romanian Government is committed to seriously engaging in the work of the Conference. We wish to contribute to the advancement of disarmament in all its aspects. My delegation supports the adoption of a programme of work as soon as possible, leading to the resumption of work towards the Conference's mandate as a negotiating body. For this to happen, real and firm political will on the part of all members is needed for a breakthrough.

Despite the difficulties faced by this forum, Romania continues to attach great value to its work. My country strongly supports the Conference on Disarmament as a major framework for nuclear issues, acknowledging its importance for international peace and strengthening world security.

The Conference has a unique role and place in the framework of multilateral bodies to deal with arms control, non-proliferation, disarmament and all related issues. Moreover, we strongly believe that it can become once again a major source for finding solutions to the challenges and concerns faced today by the international community.

Before concluding, let me make a brief historical reference and evoke a few thoughts of Nicolae Titulescu, a Romanian diplomat who served as President of the League of Nations in 1930 and 1931 and whose statue stands in the Ariana Park not very far away from this room. Speaking about the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments of 1932, Titulescu considered it as a fundamental key to mutual understanding among nations. He also pointed out that peace does not mean the lack of war, but first and foremost a state of mind made up of confidence, mutual understanding and hope in tomorrow. I believe these words are as valid and relevant today as they were then.

The President: I thank the representative of Romania for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ambassador So Se Pyong.

Mr. So Se Pyong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, at the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, let me

express our congratulations on your assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during the 2016 session. I assure you of our full support and cooperation.

The Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament forum mandated to negotiate disarmament agreements of global application towards the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament, and its significance is ever growing in the light of international developments. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea attaches high importance to the Conference on Disarmament and is highly committed to making every effort to contribute to getting the Conference back to its work.

In this regard, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has continued to support the adoption of the resolution on revitalizing the work of the Conference and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations each year in the United Nations General Assembly. Regrettably, despite the continued efforts of its member States to overcome the stalemate, no concrete result has been achieved for almost two decades in the Conference's work, contrary to the expectations of the Conference's members and the international community. This makes it incumbent upon the Conference's members more than ever to redouble their collective efforts to reinforce and revitalize the Conference and preserve credibility through the resumption of substantive work, including negotiations on nuclear disarmament. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is in favour of commencing substantive work as early as possible through the adoption of a programme of work in the 2016 session. In this connection, we hope that the Conference would adopt and implement a comprehensive and balanced programme of work on the basis of its agenda, while taking into account the security interests of all States and dealing with the core issues on an equal footing, including nuclear disarmament, in accordance with the rules of procedure, especially the rule of consensus.

I must stress that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea delegation strongly protests against and rejects the so-called Joint Statement, since it is coercive and unfair.

Nuclear disarmament is now at a crossroads. It is in today's world that nuclear weapons estimated at over 16,000 are still in existence as the status quo. It is also in today's world that sovereign States are often targeted, threatened or blackmailed by nuclear weapons, while the existence of mankind itself as a whole is being threatened.

The nuclear threat of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is, by no means, potential or abstract, but a practical and physical matter. The Korean Peninsula and its vicinity are turning into the world's biggest hotspot where a nuclear war may break out, since they have been constantly stormed with all nuclear strike means of the United States troops, including nuclear carrier strike groups and nuclear strategic flying corps.

Strategic nuclear bombers fly non-stop from the United States mainland or Guam Island to the Korean Peninsula and stage drills of dropping nuclear bombs several times every year. Aircraft carriers and submarines loaded with nuclear missiles constantly enter the waters around and in the Korean Peninsula and take part in nuclear war exercises aimed to "occupy Pyongyang".

The joint military exercises being staged across South Korea are unprecedentedly provocative in nature and have an especially high possibility of sparking off another war in Korea. The hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for over half a century — not just a couple of years — compelled the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to pursue nuclear protection. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea cannot but bolster its nuclear deterrent capability to cope with the ever-increasing nuclear threat from the United States. The grave reality of the Korean Peninsula proves who is to blame for the global retreat of the nuclear disarmament process.

Our first successful hydrogen bomb test was a just measure to defend the sovereignty of the country and the right of the nation to existence and ensure peace on the Korean Peninsula and regional security as well. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a genuinely peace-loving State which has made every effort to protect peace on the Korean Peninsula and security in the region from the vicious United States nuclear war scenario. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will neither be the first to use nuclear weapons, nor transfer relevant means and technology under any circumstances, as already declared, as long as the hostile forces of aggression do not encroach upon its sovereignty. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will engage actively, as it has in the past, in the global efforts to realize nuclear disarmament out of its noble sense of responsibility.

In conclusion, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea delegation reiterates its willingness to constructively engage in and make a due contribution to the work of the Conference this year.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Al-Nuqari.

Mr. Al-Nuqari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I should first like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are fully aware that the presidency entails major challenges and responsibilities, first and foremost the adoption of a programme of work for the Conference.

I wish to clarify at the outset that I am not the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic.

I shall now proceed with my statement. We all place our hope and trust in your diplomatic capabilities and we wish you success in your demanding tasks as this year's President of the Conference.

I should also like to welcome the High Representative of the Secretary-General and to congratulate the Deputy Secretary-General on her new assignment.

My delegation had not in fact intended to take the floor during this meeting to make a general statement concerning the work of the 2016 session of the Conference. However, on listening to the statement by the delegation of Germany, we were struck by the fact that it wishes to introduce a new approach. In my humble experience with the work of the Conference, I have never observed a new approach. What I have observed is new, misleading and unacceptable oratory of a political nature that is at odds with the work of the Conference. My country has been harangued in a manner that my delegation finds entirely unacceptable. Notwithstanding our belief in the sovereign right of every State to raise whatever points it sees fit regarding the Conference agenda, we consider it essential to exercise diplomatic tact when discussing specific States. There is no place for what is denoted as the Assad regime in United Nations terminology. There is the Syrian State, the Syrian Government, the President of the Syrian Arab Republic. That is the diplomatic language that should be used. The representative of Germany should treat my country as a sovereign State, in accordance with diplomatic tact and usage in the United Nations.

My second point: the representative of Germany has clearly assumed authority concerning an issue with which he is unfamiliar, as demonstrated by the following points and grounds:

1. Islamic State is not the only party that has used chemical weapons or materials in Syria. Other terrorist organizations such as Jaysh al-Islam and Ahrar al-Sham have also used chemical weapons in Syria.

2. Our Permanent Mission in New York has submitted, on behalf of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, many communications specifying the regions in which chemical weapons have been used in Syria and shedding light on the links between some terrorist groups and other States, which supplied the chemical agents used against the Syrian people and the Syrian Arab Army.

3. Syria was the first country to request that a fact-finding mission should be sent to investigate the use of chemical weapons in the Khan al-Assal incident, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the United Nations Secretariat. The rules of procedure require the mission to publish the report within a brief period (within days), but its publication was impeded for months. Those responsible were the States that impeded the publication of the mission report and the United Nations Secretariat, which was fully aware of the matter. As a result of the delay in publication of the mission report, the investigations naturally failed to produce the desired and expected results.

4. Syria acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention on account of its firm belief in the need to rid the Middle East region of all weapons of mass destruction. In the same spirit, Syria supported the resolution of the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review and Extension Conference, which provided for the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. In addition, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Syria launched an initiative in 2003 calling for the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East region. However, the initiative was obstructed. Syria has undertaken, through its accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, to fulfil all the obligations contained in its provisions. In view of these good intentions, any reference to a lack of information or any other omission is unacceptable. We rely on a policy of constructive and effective dialogue with the Organization to address any points and uncertainties that may exist in this context.

5. The Security Council adopted a resolution aimed at investigating the use of chemical weapons in Syria. As the team has not yet issued its conclusions, we are baffled by the misleading political statement on the subject made by the representative of Germany. We advise the representative of Germany, before presenting us with his ideas about new working methods for the Conference, to familiarize himself with the details of the issues that he raises and on which he passes judgment. Clearly, he is entirely uninformed about the details of the files in question. If these are the working methods that he is contemplating, we wish to inform him that they are doomed to failure.

I apologize once again, Mr. President, but my delegation had to take the floor at this meeting to respond to the statement. Indeed, I have not been unaccustomed to hearing such statements during my years of participation in the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I have exhausted the list of speakers, but I have three more countries who wish to take the floor. In the order of the requests, I will call on the United States first, then India, followed by the Republic of Korea. I give the floor to the representative of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor, but I feel I need to reply to the charges that were made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

I think the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea here could not but be struck by the chorus of condemnation of its recent nuclear test. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea knows what it needs to do with regard to its international responsibilities. It likes to deflect attention from its provocative actions by, of course, steering the debate towards the United States and what the United States has or has not done.

Let me be very clear: the United States does not threaten North Korea at all. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea needs to stop its provocative acts. This fourth nuclear test was of great concern to the international community, as we have heard here today. It is the only country that has conducted a nuclear test in this millennium. North Korea needs to stop its provocative behaviour and its provocative acts; it needs to take meaningful steps towards a verified denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. It is only then that it can begin to get back into the good graces of the international community.

So, I call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to stop these provocative acts and to take seriously the concerns that the international community has. Understand that the international community recognizes that new action is needed to hold the Democratic People's Republic of Korea accountable to its denuclearization commitments and international obligations. The Security Council, of course, is looking to see what new steps can be taken to prevent North Korea from continuing its provocative behaviour. So, instead of focusing its attacks on the United States, it needs to look at itself and it needs to take the actions that the international community requires if it is ever to get back in the good graces of the international community.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of India, Ambassador Varma.

Mr. Varma (India): Mr. President, it is a pleasure to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament as we commence the 2016 annual session. You can be assured of the full support of the Indian delegation.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the High Representative, Mr. Kim Won-soo, for his presence here and for making available to us the very important statement on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. We would like to take this opportunity also to convey our appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Michael Møller, and his team. We would also like to welcome the new Acting Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Mary Soliman, and wish her a successful tenure in Geneva. It is, of course, a great pleasure to welcome our new colleagues, the Ambassadors or Permanent Representatives to the Conference on Disarmament of Belarus, Canada, Colombia, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania and Sweden. We have had the opportunity to interact with some of them already and we look forward to working with all of them as we proceed in this Conference.

I would like to extend a particular word of welcome to our colleague from Pakistan, Ambassador Janjua, who is someone we know from before. She is not new either to Geneva or the Conference; we look forward to working with the Ambassador of Pakistan.

India welcomes the adoption by the Conference of its agenda today. We attach high importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, as mandated by the Final Document of the first session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and reaffirmed most recently in Assembly resolution 70/67. The complex international situation underlines the urgency of redoubling efforts to reach multilaterally agreed responses to the varied challenges to international peace and security. For too long, this Conference has been held back from discharging its core mandate of negotiating international legal instruments of global scope and universal acceptance. We hope that this impasse can be broken this year.

We would like to highlight some key resolutions adopted at the seventieth session of the General Assembly, which in the view of the Indian delegation merit attention and follow-up by this Conference.

- Resolution 70/34, on follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament, calls for the urgent commencement of

negotiations in the Conference 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. This is a priority for a vast majority of the international community. The Group of 21 has made specific proposals in this regard, including working papers CD/2032 and CD/2044 submitted in 2015.

- Resolution 70/62, on a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, calls on the Conference to commence negotiations in order to reach agreement on an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. This is a long-standing resolution of the General Assembly, first introduced by India in 1982, and reflects our belief that a legally binding instrument prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons will contribute to the progressive delegitimization of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines — an essential step for attaining the goal of nuclear disarmament.
- Resolution 70/39, on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, urges this Conference to agree on and implement a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. There is strong international support for implementation of this resolution on the basis of the essential mandate, and we hope that the Conference will act accordingly. We recall in this context the significant report of the Group of Governmental Experts on this topic contained in document CD/2023 submitted to the Conference in June 2015.
- Resolution 70/26, on prevention of an arms race in outer space, invites the Conference to establish a working group as early as possible during its 2016 session. The Group of 21 submitted a working paper on this agenda item, contained in document CD/2031, in 2015.
- Resolution 70/25, on conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, recommends that the Conference actively continue intensive negotiations with a view to reaching early agreement and concluding effective international agreements on this issue. The Group of 21 had submitted a working paper on this in document CD/2045 in 2015.

Mr. President, we request you to take into account the General Assembly resolutions which I have just mentioned in drawing up a draft programme of work for the consideration of the Conference. This would be consistent with rules 27 to 29 of the rules of procedure. In our view, the Conference should seek to preserve the gains of past decisions, while making progress on its agenda items to achieve consensus on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that would allow the commencement of substantive work.

A number of delegations have today referred to the nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 6 January this year. We have also noted the statement made by the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea explaining his country's position. As far as India is concerned, the official spokesman of the Indian External Affairs Ministry had expressed deep concern about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea acting in violation of its international commitments in this regard and called upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from such actions, which adversely impact on peace and stability in the region. The spokesman also said that the concerns of

India about proliferation links between North-East Asia and our neighbourhood were well known.

The President: I thank the representative of India for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I have two more speakers on my list and, under the right of reply, I have the Republic of Korea first, and then the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as the last speaker.

Mr. Kim Young-moo (Republic of Korea): Regarding the statement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea delegation, I do not intend to go through it point by point. Regardless of any argument put forward by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the fundamental truth is that it is violating multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions as long as it possesses a nuclear weapon programme.

Therefore, a nuclear test is something that North Korea has an obligation not to conduct; it is not something it can put forth as a condition. The international community has repeatedly made it clear that North Korea cannot have the status of a nuclear-weapon State in any case.

Abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear ballistic missile programmes, including its uranium enrichment programme, in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner is the only course that will lead to security and the hope of prosperity for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This is what has been said by almost every member State of the Conference this morning, and I hope that the North Korean delegation will convey this message to its capital exactly as it is.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Jo Chol Su (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I did not have the intention to take the floor again, Mr. President, but, given the distorted arguments and groundless allegations concerning the current hydrogen bomb test, I would like to make clear once again our position and rationale in order for the members of this Conference and those present here to have an unbiased and correct understanding on this issue.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not interested in aggravating the situation, as it is channelling all its efforts into the building of an economic power and feels no need to provoke anyone. Our primary task is to develop the economy and improve the people's standard of living, and to this end it requires a stable situation and peaceful climate more than anything.

As already mentioned by my Ambassador, due to the hostile acts by the United States against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea which have become routine, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has also become routine in its work to implement the line of simultaneously developing the two fronts of self-defence to cope with them. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has on many occasions put forward proposals for preserving peace and stability in the Peninsula and North-East Asia, including the ones for ceasing our nuclear tests and concluding a peace treaty in return for the United States halting the joint military exercises. It is preposterous for the United States and their allies to talk about provocations from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, though it is persistently sidestepping our fair and above-board proposals and escalating the tension.

The United States has been aggravating the tension in the Korean Peninsula for decades by introducing strategic nuclear strike means into South Korea. The Korean Peninsula and its vicinity are thus turning into the world's biggest hotspot where a nuclear war may break out.

In the United Nations, too, it is now making great haste to fabricate a resolution on sanctions aimed at such hostile acts, hamstringing our efforts for peaceful economic construction and the improvement of people's standard of living. Such provocative and hostile acts against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will not be confined to escalating the tension in the Korean Peninsula but inevitably will lead to war.

Access of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the hydrogen bomb is a righteous choice to stand against the United States, which is posing a consistent nuclear threat to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with huge nukes of various types. It is the legitimate right of a sovereign State for self-defence, and fair and just, that no one can slander.

As already clarified, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will bolster in every way its capabilities for nuclear attack and retaliation to cope with the ceaseless acts by the United States infringing upon its sovereignty and perpetrating threatening provocations, while it will not deliberately use nuclear weapons.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will neither be the first to use nuclear weapons nor transfer relevant means and technology under any circumstances, as long as the hostile forces of aggression do not encroach upon its sovereignty.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Is there any other delegation that wishes to take the floor for the last time? I give the floor to the representative of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States): I will be very brief, Mr. President. I think the international community as represented here spoke very loudly to the case of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I think the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should take heed from the signal that was just sent from the international community.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. That brings us to the end of the list of speakers and the time allotted today. It is almost after 1 p.m. now.

I would now like to call on the secretariat to share with us some organizational information they have for this meeting.

Mr. Kalbusch (Secretary of the Conference): Thank you, Mr. President, and thanks to our colleagues, the interpreters, for staying overtime.

I invite all delegations to look into your mailboxes. We have distributed document CD/INF.71 and I would be grateful if you could look at the document and see if all the information regarding delegations is correct, including the composition of your delegation.

We have also distributed document CD/2049, containing a letter of the Secretary-General of 4 January 2016 transmitting to the Conference all relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. You will also find the Office for Disarmament Affairs programme report of voluntary contributions, which might be of interest and may encourage you to further support the Office's work.

The President: First of all, let me convey my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for all the kind words you have said, or sent to me, in the course of the business of this meeting today. I thank you all for such kind words.

That concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on 2 February 2016 at 10 a.m. This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.