

English

---

**Final record of the one thousand five hundred and fifteenth plenary meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 8 August 2019, at 10.10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Duong Chi Dung.....(Viet Nam)



**The President:** I call to order the 1515th meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Excellencies, distinguished delegates, as previously announced, this morning's plenary meeting will be devoted to agenda item 2, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". We will hear from Ambassador Omar Zniber of Morocco, Ambassador Robbert Jan Gabriëlse of the Netherlands, Ambassador Yann Hwang of France and Mr. Wilfred Wan from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). Following the panellists' presentations, I intend to open the floor for a discussion on the substantive topic of today's meeting. Should any delegation wish to make comments in an informal setting, we will switch to such a setting. When our discussion concludes I will open the floor for the delegations to address any other matters they would like to raise. I would like now to give the floor to our first panellist, Ambassador Omar Zniber, Permanent Representative of Morocco.

**Mr. Zniber (Morocco) (*spoke in French*):** Thank you very much, Mr. President. Allow me to begin by thanking you for the opportunity extended to me and my colleagues, Ambassador Gabriëlse of the Netherlands and Ambassador Hwang of France, along with Mr. Wan of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), to make our modest contribution to the debate on agenda item 2, namely the prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters. This useful and interesting debate is helping to enhance our understanding of a subject of considerable importance on our agenda and allowing us to build on the work performed in 2018 by subsidiary body 2 under the leadership of the Ambassador Gabriëlse. It is in no way my intention simply to put forward our national position on this important subject; rather, I intend to provide relevant points for consideration to enrich our debates.

Mr. President, it goes without saying that throughout its history – indeed, since the dawn of time – humanity has been plagued by war. However, since 1945, the nature of military operations has been transformed to such an extent that our future has been put in jeopardy. Today, humanity is facing an unprecedented threat owing to the massive accumulation of nuclear devices and the arms race. Were existing arsenals to be used, owing to misfortune and irresponsible behaviour, in the context of a major war, they could wipe out humanity in its entirety. This is why we share the view of those who believe that there can be no winner in the event of a nuclear war. From our point of view, possessing nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is no guarantee of security. Furthermore, other countries do not have access to this alleged guarantee. In reality, possessing such weapons can only foster the risk of nuclear proliferation and, therefore, of nuclear war. Why, in our multipolar world, should other countries not harbour the ambition to obtain, and I quote, their own "absolute guarantee of security"?

Today, the situation regarding the use of nuclear weapons remains particularly dangerous and worrying, owing to an unfortunate escalation in global geopolitical tensions and the abandonment of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. These factors conspire to make our world even less stable and reduce the likelihood of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty being extended before it expires in 2021, at a time marked by the increasing prominence of doctrines of nuclear deterrence and statements made by nuclear-weapon States announcing advanced plans to update their nuclear weapons capabilities. We nonetheless welcome the recent resumption of talks between the United States of America and the Russian Federation in Geneva and the encouraging comments made in this very room on 30 July 2019 by our Russian colleague, who reported that substantial, positive exchanges had recently taken place between the two countries.

Mr. President, in view of the above, the international community has a political and moral duty to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again or, in other words, to ensure that the risk of them being used is reduced to zero. Whether we achieve this goal depends on our ability both to break the current deadlock resulting from the conflictual nature of our perceptions of, and positions on, the issue and to show imagination through the adoption of sustained, balanced and innovative approaches. Such approaches should be characterized by a greater emphasis on what unites us and our common challenges and by our concerted efforts to make pragmatic and realistic progress through the implementation of a step-by-step strategy comprising initiatives focused on achieving practical and

operational objectives that can enable us to move forward towards our strategic goal of achieving a safer, more secure and nuclear-weapon-free world.

In view of the above, it seems obvious to us that the prevention of nuclear war cannot be dissociated from the other items on the agenda of our Conference, even if their consideration has reached different levels of maturity. We therefore see merit in taking a more comprehensive and global approach to this item, since these issues all need to be discussed and addressed in relation to one another. In that regard, nuclear disarmament must remain the Conference's top priority, in accordance with the special status that it was accorded in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. According to their statements and pledges, this is a conviction shared by the vast majority of Conference members, including the Group of 21 and the permanent members of the Security Council. In his address to the United Nations here in Geneva in January 2017, the President of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Xi Jinping, described nuclear weapons as a sword of Damocles hanging over mankind and called for their prohibition and eventual elimination.

In that regard, and without wishing to make a defence here of the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, I believe that that instrument is seen as the manifestation of our renewed recognition of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of using nuclear weapons and of the growing risks associated with the accidental, or even intentional, use of nuclear force. It also reflects a growing sense of frustration at the failure to meet core nuclear disarmament commitments. A treaty on prohibition will not make nuclear weapons disappear overnight, of course, but it could give fresh impetus to the opening of inclusive negotiations in our Conference with a view to developing a consensus-based legal instrument applying to both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. It would also be a concrete step towards fulfilling the obligation to pursue in good faith negotiations on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament, as set out in article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and reaffirmed by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion on the Legality of the Use by a State of Nuclear Weapons in Armed Conflict. In the meantime, risk-reduction efforts could serve as common ground and the starting point for dialogue between the States that have endorsed this process and those that are not currently prepared to support those efforts. Support for risk reduction is an intermediate position that nuclear-weapon States and their allies can adopt pending the fulfilment of nuclear disarmament obligations. We need action now. The risks are considerable, the danger is real. The Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, launched as we know by the United States of America, and the Nuclear Security Summit are enlightening examples that could guide our endeavours.

On a separate note, establishing new nuclear-weapon-free zones is an important measure that can help to build confidence and promote transparency while facilitating the achievement of our ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Now is the opportunity to reaffirm the importance both of creating a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and of the decision of the General Assembly 73/546, in which it entrusted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations the convening of a conference aimed at elaborating a treaty on the establishment of such a zone. I would like to take this opportunity to repeat the appeal to all States to offer this conference their active support and to contribute to its success.

Mr President, distinguished colleagues, the establishment of a legally binding instrument banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is another means of preventing nuclear war, and an important one. Several differences of opinion on this issue emerged during the discussions in subsidiary body 2 at the 2018 session, but there was nonetheless unanimous agreement that any such treaty must be non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable at the international level. It is our humble opinion, shared by the vast majority of members of our Conference, that a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons must, firstly, make a practical contribution to the dual objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Secondly, it must lead to undiminished security for all States with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all States to protect their security. Thirdly, it must be sufficiently practical, concrete and

flexible to allow for future developments and thereby to sustain its full value both as an effective measure relating to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and as a means of building confidence among States. Now is the time to commend the work performed by the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) expert preparatory group and to recall the draft treaty on that subject submitted by France in April 2015, which could be a useful contribution and could serve as a strong basis for further work on the establishment of such an instrument. To my mind, we must not ignore the current geopolitical climate, which makes us more aware than ever of the need for us to conclude our work and steer these discussions towards the adoption of such a treaty.

Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, the negotiation and adoption in the Conference on Disarmament of a universal, legally binding and unconditional instrument on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States constitute a fundamental element that would complement other measures aimed at reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and create an international climate conducive to the promotion of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war. It is certainly regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament failed to reach consensus on the adoption of the report on that subject prepared by subsidiary body 4 last year. However, the fact that the report was not adopted in no way diminishes the value of the work undertaken, which can be used as a starting point for future discussions on the subject.

On a separate note, and as recently signalled by Mr. Zerbo, the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, very encouraging and satisfactory progress is being made on the verification of compliance with that Treaty. However, the entry into force of the Treaty and its universalization – through ratification by all States, not just those mentioned in annex 2 thereof – remain imperative to prevent a nuclear arms race.

In the same vein, it is important to recognize that the prospect of an arms race in outer space represents a serious threat to international peace and security, hence the necessity of undertaking further measures with appropriate and effective verification provisions to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects, an issue that has unfortunately become the subject of renewed speculation and concern in recent times. Alongside the prevention of an arms race in outer space, there is also an urgent need to ensure strict compliance with the existing legal regime governing the use of outer space, and thereby to reduce the growing threat posed by the militarization of outer space, including the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space, which continue to contribute to the further erosion of an international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and the strengthening of international security.

Mr. President, following this overview, I would like to take this opportunity if I may to speak very briefly on behalf of my own delegation to present our vision of the work of the Conference in relation to the need for progress, particularly on item 2. From our perspective, the current situation and the real threats to our collective security reinforce our conviction that only cooperative, coordinated and combined action by the international community can provide appropriate solutions to this universal challenge.

Since the Conference on Disarmament is the sole forum for disarmament negotiations, it is important that we empower it to fulfil its indispensable mandate as effectively as possible. In that regard, a programme of work – although not an end in itself – remains the only means available to move forward negotiations on all crucial concerns, including those being discussed this morning. I believe that the arguments that I have put forward in this statement make it absolutely clear not only that a programme of work would be useful but that its adoption is urgently needed for us to respond more effectively to our common challenges.

In accordance with the nature of compromise, and despite the difficulties of the current climate, everyone must make certain concessions in order to build consensus and come to agreement on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. The draft programme that you have kindly put forward, Mr President, is a skilfully balanced

compromise that builds on the progress made by your predecessors and that, above all and in our opinion, reflects the priorities and concerns of all parties in a sufficiently balanced way. We wish to reiterate our willingness to join the consensus on this matter. In order to ensure that our work is effective, inclusive and representative of all points of view, it is also important that we reopen the debate, in a calm environment free from political influences, on the expansion of the Conference and the strengthening of its working methods; in that regard, we have seen some promising signs over the past few days, we hope.

To paraphrase once more my colleague Mr. Azeez, the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, we believe that it would be worthwhile to develop training programmes in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Although the Office for Disarmament Affairs makes a considerable contribution through its Fellowship Programme, we would like to see that programme expanded and, in particular, made available in different languages. It is an important tool that can help us to come together, to understand one another better and to unite all the countries that wish to make a contribution in this field. We also encourage individual States to launch similar programmes and thereby to follow the example of India, which is providing training for young diplomats – including those from developing countries – on this morning's subject of preventing a nuclear arms race.

Mr. President, we believe that the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, entitled "Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament", constitutes, in view of the practical measures that it lays out, a worthy contribution and a valuable road map for the development of new partnerships and closer collaboration between the different components of our Conference, civil society, the private sector and other important actors. As artificial intelligence and the scientific and technological advances that it enables continue to revolutionize our lives, we must remain vigilant and appreciate that technological innovation in the field of armament could jeopardize the security of future generations and that it is incumbent upon us to give the matter due consideration. Quite aside from their malicious use by non-State groups, the development of cybernetics, cyberweapons and lethal autonomous weapons systems could not only change the way wars are fought but trigger a new and potentially destabilizing arms race.

Mr. President, I cannot finish without reaffirming our commitment to the virtues of collective dialogue and multilateralism, and our belief in the central importance of the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. The Kingdom of Morocco remains true to its stance of moderation, open-mindedness and constant commitment and is ready to work and contribute to all efforts aimed at reaching consensus on a programme of work and all initiatives likely to strengthen international peace and security. Morocco is involved in a number of ways in disarmament and non-proliferation processes. It has a long tradition and a wealth of experience in these fields, which it places at the service of this forum with a view to revitalizing the work of the Conference and reinforcing its role.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the representative of Morocco for his statement.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like now to welcome Ambassador Robbert Jan Gabriëlse, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands. You have the floor, Sir.

**Mr. Gabriëlse** (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, for your kind invitation to speak on the panel today. It is an honour to address the Conference on Disarmament on agenda item 2, together with my distinguished colleagues and good friends.

Last year I had the pleasure to coordinate subsidiary body 2 on the same agenda item. I believe we had substantive and fruitful sessions, which I will start by summarizing, based on the report of 2018 that was adopted by consensus and which is contained in document CD/2139. After that, I will share a few of my personal thoughts on the process, including on a way ahead for the Conference.

Subsidiary body 2 discussed the following items: a ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices; other matters under

agenda item 2, “Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters”, focusing on nuclear risk reduction; and possible areas of further work.

On the issue of a ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, discussions were held on definitions, scope, verification and institutional arrangements. General comments were made and one session was devoted to the consideration of effective measures, including the role and usefulness of transparency and confidence-building measures. Two sessions focused on scope and verification, as we noted that there were deep divergences of views on those issues. We effectively agreed or reaffirmed some commonalities of a general nature, namely that a treaty should be non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable; that it should practically contribute to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament objectives, bearing in mind paragraph 50 (b) of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament; and that it should lead to undiminished security for all States with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military-holdings level, taking into account the need of all States to protect their security.

We also agreed or reaffirmed some commonalities with regard to definitions and institutional arrangements, although diverging views were also expressed on these issues. One of the more contentious issues – or to put it differently, where the views were indeed very divergent – was that of the scope of a treaty. We noted that some delegations insisted that the treaty should only focus on banning the future production of fissile material. In that regard, reference was made to the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein. As that mandate remains the most relevant and valid basis for conducting negotiations in the Conference on such a treaty, these delegations argued that there was no need for a new mandate. Other delegations were more flexible on this matter, focusing on the distinction between different categories of existing stocks of fissile material, and arguing that some of these categories could be included. According to these delegations, the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein left sufficient constructive ambiguity as to whether stocks were included in the scope or not. Yet other delegations insisted that the treaty’s scope should include future as well as past production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. For some, the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein remains the basis for negotiations as it did not exclude existing stocks, while other delegations expressed the view that the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein has outlived their utility and validity as the basis of substantive work on this issue. Discussions took place on the functional categorization of fissile materials, non-diversion, the issue of international transfers or acquisition and the treaty’s contribution to non-proliferation and disarmament objectives.

Another issue that merited in-depth discussion, because of the technical complexities, was verification. Different verification approaches, such as a focused approach, a comprehensive approach and a hybrid approach, were discussed. Delegations discussed who, or what States, should be the focus of requirements on verification, as many States already have safeguarded facilities due to existing legal obligations, in particular those under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The issue of addressing States’ concerns regarding sensitive information in the context of verification was also discussed, as was the type of inspections, the verification toolbox and the body which should be tasked with verification. The question of what further technical and scientific work remained to be done in this field, was also discussed.

On the issue of reducing nuclear weapons risks, an expert from Clingendael, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, outlined a number of policy options, which was followed by a discussion in which delegations presented their national positions. Issues such as whether or not nuclear deterrence is obsolete, the importance of strategic stability or balance and the need to multilateralize risk reduction measures were discussed.

In terms of possible areas of further work on fissile materials, delegations emphasized the value of such work and made a number of suggestions in that regard, including on technical and scientific aspects, scope, definitions, verification, legal and institutional arrangements and transparency and confidence-building measures. Delegations also agreed that further discussion on nuclear risk reduction was welcome in the Conference.

That concludes my summary of the discussions held in subsidiary body 2 last year.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, looking at the way ahead for the Conference, let me first touch upon what the General Assembly has urged us to do. Resolution 73/65, adopted by the First Committee at its last session, urges the Conference to fully examine the consensus report of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) expert preparatory group, skilfully led by Canada. This report contains a very helpful “à la carte menu” of the different elements of a treaty, without prejudicing any outcome on issues such as scope and objective. The substance of the report, even if it may not garner full consensus here in the Conference, can be very helpful in our deliberations and implicitly has already been so, as we have witnessed delegations using it in their national interventions.

While we are awaiting the political will to commence negotiations on a treaty, there is “more work” that can be done to address some outstanding questions. Needless to say, this work is not a prerequisite for the start of negotiations. According to the Netherlands and many other countries, negotiations should and could commence today, as the so-called “more work” could be addressed as part of those negotiations. Some suggestions as to the nature of this “more work” have been made in subsidiary body 2, as I mentioned earlier. But also, the report of the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group contains a detailed recommendation that “further expert work be carried out, including in the Conference on Disarmament, to (a) elaborate how the various approaches to verification would work in practice and (b) assess the resource implications associated with the use in a treaty of the various potential elements”.

What is the advantage of doing this so-called “more work” on fissile materials in the meantime? First, it builds confidence: the more issues are discussed in detail, the more understanding it creates. Second, once the issue of the mandate to start negotiations is overcome, it will hopefully be relatively easy to agree on a way forward, as all options have been elaborated and discussed earlier. And third, it ensures that disarmament diplomats are kept abreast of the topic. That is why I would argue that the issue of fissile materials merits specific attention in a separate subsidiary body or working group of the Conference, which might be established next year. We have basically identified our “homework”, i.e. a list of substantive issues that need further elaboration. Also, we need a vehicle and a forum in which to do this; namely, a subsidiary body of the Conference. Because if we do not take it up here, some might wonder whether it could be taken up elsewhere instead. It would be sad to see this happen, as a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices could be a very important step in our collective goal of attaining a world without nuclear weapons. The Conference has been set up to negotiate multilateral instruments such as these, so I look forward to this body conducting this work next year.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Gabriëlse for his statement and contributions. Now I would like to give the floor to Ambassador Yann Hwang, Permanent Representative of France.

**Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*):** Thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to address the Conference on an issue that is a priority for my country, namely the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. It gives me great pleasure to be among you and to contribute to this important debate alongside the Ambassador of Morocco, the Ambassador of the Netherlands and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. As you know, my country is the only nuclear-weapon State to have definitively dismantled its production facilities for fissile materials (plutonium and uranium) for nuclear weapons. Without wishing to overload you with technical details, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you my country’s experience of dismantling those facilities.

I should begin by saying that my country’s first major decision was taken in the 1990s and concerned, as you know, nuclear tests, which were discontinued in 1996. Immediately after that decision, France signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. As a result, my country decided to dismantle, immediately and irreversibly, its site for nuclear weapons testing. It did so in 1997 and, to date, France remains the only nuclear-weapon State to have taken such a measure. The second major

decision taken by my country in the 1990s, which complemented the first, was to discontinue the production of fissile material, namely plutonium and highly enriched uranium, for weapons. As a result, and without delay, my country decided to dismantle the relevant facilities. Again, France is the only State to have done so. In both cases, a political decision was immediately followed by tangible, irreversible action consistent with the step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament, which is widely known and which we promote, in accordance with our obligations under article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

As you know, my country advocates the so-called principle of strict sufficiency, based on various strategic, political, military and economic considerations, and this has also played a prominent role and remains an integral component of the French nuclear deterrence policy. My country thus maintains its arsenal at the lowest possible level consistent with the strategic context, in application of this principle, and has never taken part in the arms race. The size of the French nuclear arsenal (300 warheads) is based not on the level of other arsenals around the world but on our assessment of the strategic context. We thereby reject the principle of a counterforce strategy aimed at destroying the enemy's nuclear capabilities.

I will now turn to the actual dismantling of the facilities. We used to produce highly enriched uranium at the Pierrelatte site in the Rhône valley in southern France. The site consisted of four plants allowing for the gradual enrichment of uranium. We began dismantling it in 1996 by removing radioactive fissile materials, cleaning the UF6 production facility that had been used in the enrichment process, disassembling and destroying equipment, managing waste that had been contaminated by uranium and cleaning walls and floors. That first phase, aimed at preparing the site for dismantling, was carried out between 1996 and 2002. The second phase – the industrial phase – began in 2002 and was completed, on budget and on time, in 2010. The cost of the operations was €670 million.

Our highly enriched plutonium was produced using three reactors (G1, G2 and G3) at the Marcoule site, 40 kilometres from Pierrelatte. The dismantling began with removing all nuclear materials (fuel assemblies, the main sources of radioactivity) from the cores of the reactors, disassembling and destroying control and cooling equipment, managing waste (especially irradiated materials) and, last of all, cleaning the walls, floors and all other parts of the building. Following the completion in 1996 of this first phase, which also included the removal of spent fuel and the dismantling of the fuel supply, control and cooling systems, the reactor hall could be accessed without protection. To date, 20,000 tons of waste have been produced over the course of the dismantling operations, most of which has been transported to specially designed storage sites. The reactors were permanently shut down in 1996 and are now being monitored. The total cost of the operations was €650 million. The dismantling of the plant reached an irreversible state at the end of the 2000s.

In conclusion, one way – and, from our perspective, the best way – to guarantee the irreversible cessation of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons is to dismantle the facilities used for that purpose. This is the route that my country chose to go down. Moreover, in the name of transparency vis-à-vis the international community, visits were carried out in 2008 and 2009, and I am pleased to announce that France will organize another visit for members of the Conference on Disarmament in the first quarter of 2020. We will send your invitations out in due course.

The French experience can be summarized in four points: firstly, we believe that dismantling is the immediate solution, even though it comes at a cost, since my country's total investment has reached €10 billion; secondly, we believe that dismantling must be irreversible and must make a real and specific contribution to the implementation of article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; thirdly, we attach great importance to the transparency of the dismantling process; and lastly, I would like to emphasize that we have acquired experience and developed capacities in the field of dismantling that will be of benefit to the international community.

Mr. President, if I may, I would like to make one last point on the relevance of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. I will be relatively brief, as I think that my Dutch colleague covered the main points. I would like to dispel

four misconceptions. The first, as I see it, is the idea that such a treaty is no longer relevant. In my country's opinion, there is an extremely urgent need for an international instrument banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, as was highlighted – as the Ambassador of the Netherlands pointed out – by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1993 and, above all, at three NPT review conferences in 1995, 2000 and 2010. The subject is therefore still relevant.

The second misconception is that a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons would not contribute to nuclear disarmament and that we should thus immediately turn our attention elsewhere. For my country, in today's climate, no other legal instrument could take the place of such a treaty. To be more precise, such an instrument, by placing a cap on current stocks of fissile material that could be used for nuclear weapons, would definitively restrict the development of existing arsenals. It would thus enable us to make realistic and effective progress on the implementation of article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, without jeopardizing regional and international stability and in accordance with the principle of undiminished security for all. The challenge is indeed to impose effective restrictions on the qualitative and quantitative development of nuclear arsenals, in a manner that is complementary to the provisions of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The third misconception, from my point of view, which is often put forward and which I have heard at times in this forum, is that the diplomatic processes on the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons have been futile. This is not true, and I think that the Ambassador of the Netherlands was clear on this point, too. It is important, indeed very important, to note that considerable progress has been made on the technical maturity of the draft treaty in recent years, as demonstrated by the extensive discussions held by the Group of Governmental Experts and the high-level expert preparatory group – resulting in substantive reports, adopted by consensus in 2015 and 2018 – and by the subsidiary body of the Conference on Disarmament, which considered the issue last year.

Lastly, the fourth misconception, Mr. President, and another that I often hear, is that document CD/1299 and the Shannon mandate contained therein are preventing the negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons from proceeding. I think that this is wrong and that we should instead build on this momentum and see the Shannon mandate as an asset to our efforts to facilitate, without delay, the opening of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, in accordance with the rules of consensus and on the basis of that document. On this point, please allow me to clear up one misunderstanding: the Shannon mandate is not an obstacle to negotiations but, on the contrary, an asset to our Conference. It lays the necessary foundations for a future treaty by reflecting the diversity of the different positions but without making their convergence a prerequisite for negotiations. For this reason, it currently constitutes a viable basis for treaty negotiations and, from my point of view, Mr. President, if we were to renegotiate a mandate for another such instrument, I think that perhaps – even without question – we would reach the same outcome. In a nutshell, nuclear disarmament will not be possible without the adoption of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, which is an essential and unavoidable step towards the achievement of our shared goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of France for his statement and his contribution.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like now to welcome Mr. Wilfred Wan, Researcher, Weapons of Mass Destruction and Other Strategic Weapons, of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. You have the floor.

**Mr. Wan** (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)): Thank you, Mr. President, for extending me the invitation to speak in front of the Conference on Disarmament on agenda item 2. I am very appreciative of the opportunity. I would like to begin by mentioning the work of UNIDIR on gender and disarmament. The Institute is part of the International Gender Champions network and is committed to gender parity and

diversity in arms control and disarmament. We know that the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group distributed a resource pack earlier this year to the presidents of the Conference, which is available on the UNIDIR website. It includes practical suggestions on making multilateral meetings more inclusive and gender-responsive and we recommend that you consider it.

My comments today will be on another area of the Institute's work, which is the topic of nuclear weapon risk reduction. Recently there has been increased attention on the notion of reducing the risk of nuclear weapon use, whether intentionally or inadvertently caused. A couple of preliminary observations on this concept: risk reduction can include a wide range of activities, including steps to improve the security and safety of nuclear weapons to lessen the risk of accidents, to lower the possibility of miscalculation in crisis and to prevent terrorists from obtaining nuclear materials. The risk of nuclear weapon use will exist for as long as nuclear weapons do, so the ultimate risk reduction measure is to get rid of them. Risk reduction as a concept is certainly not new. Measures were taken in the context of the cold war between the United States of America and the Soviet Union and there have been confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan over the last few decades.

However, we are looking in a more systematic and explicit manner at the topic, which has gained momentum in the last few years, both in the United Nations and beyond. In 2016, there was a General Assembly resolution on it. As the Ambassador mentioned, it was discussed in the Conference last year. It has also been discussed in the Disarmament Commission, in the review cycles of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, in dialogues between the five permanent members of the Security Council and in recent initiatives such as the Creating the Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative of the United States and the Stockholm Ministerial Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament and the NPT. Risk reduction is seen as a potential area of collaboration, in an otherwise fraught nuclear environment, to build trust and confidence and as a means to move forward. Yet despite widespread consensus on the importance and value of reducing the risk of use, the topic presents a few challenges, four of which I will now address.

The first challenge is that there is subjectivity about what constitutes the risk of use and thus different perceptions on risk reduction measures that are appropriate. Measures that are often discussed, such as commitments to no first use and de-alerting might be obvious risk reduction steps for some, but for others they have impacts on deterrence credibility or strategic stability and they may raise the possibility of use in other circumstances.

A second challenge is that risk is dynamic and ever-changing. One example is that the impacts of technological developments on nuclear risk are yet to be determined. Topics such as artificial intelligence in command and control, the greater incorporation of space-based assets in early warning systems, and developments in hypersonic missiles have unknown aspects that make risk assessments, let alone agreements on appropriate risk reduction measures, quite difficult.

A third, interrelated challenge is that risk differs across time and space. Certainly, nuclear risk is a global issue, given the potential consequences of nuclear weapon use and the interconnecting nature of relations. At the same time, risk is also linked to contextual aspects, including States' nuclear characteristics and immediate security environments. Accordingly, risk reduction is not a one-size-fits-all endeavour.

Fourth, and linked to all of the other challenges, is that there are constraints on what is possible in view of political realities. The subjective nature of risk means that some measures will simply not be viable. Risk perceptions are ultimately informed by national perspectives, priorities and strategic cultures.

In recognition of these issues, realities and challenges, UNIDIR seeks to recast risk reduction in a fuller and more systematic manner. Our work stream began in December 2018 with the identification of three objectives: to map the current state of ideas and activities in risk reduction; to identify a range of means to address different elements of risk, including those linked to new technologies; and to produce concrete proposals for States to

consider and explore in support of risk reduction. We shared initial findings from our mapping and scoping work in an April 2019 publication entitled “Nuclear Risk Reduction: The State of Ideas” which is available on the UNIDIR website. We found it quite useful to compile the many ideas that have been expressed, and we noted that risk reduction measures and proposals tend to tackle particular aspects of risk, which is understandable, but that they also tend to be looked at in isolation.

Yet risk reduction undertakings will likely need to be intertwined across different types of measures. For example, political commitments will be accompanied by strategic and operational activities at different levels – national, bilateral, multilateral – as appropriate. We felt that instead of starting with individual measures or proposals, we needed to turn the equation around: effective risk reduction requires first understanding the paths by which nuclear use might take place. We hope to pinpoint the sources and underlying conditions that drive risk-of-use pathways. Then we would explore ways in which we can address those sources and conditions with baskets of varying and mutually reinforcing measures and elements. In this way, we would narrow the possibility of these pathways coming to fruition, lessen their number and thus reduce risk overall.

In June 2019, UNIDIR released a nuclear risk reduction framework for analysis which establishes initial parameters for further study. In that publication, we posited a framework that identified four general pathways to use. First is doctrinal use, which is nuclear use as outlined in declared policies, with allowance for ambiguities in those policies. Second is escalatory use, which is use linked to ongoing tension or conflict or the introduction of nuclear weapons in times of crisis. Third is unauthorized use, which is non-sanctioned use, including use by rogue actors within a State or by non-State actors and use of lost, stolen, diverted or crude nuclear devices. And fourth is accidental use, which is use linked to error, including technical malfunctions and human fallibility.

We should observe that these categories are not meant to be exhaustive or mutually exclusive; in fact, underlying conditions will often feed into one another and have interactive and wide-ranging effects. For UNIDIR, these four pathways constituted a starting point for discussion, including discussion of a general approach to addressing each pathway. The framework contained in this paper serves as the basis for the contextual analysis which UNIDIR will conduct next. Our plan is to engage with and obtain the perspectives of diverse local and regional experts in order to identify areas of potential common interest as a basis for joint action. We are looking to contribute to the discussions at the 2020 NPT Review Conference, although the work will go well beyond that because risk reduction is a larger issue.

Let me conclude by examining and responding to some of the concerns and criticisms that have been expressed on the topic of nuclear risk reduction. The first criticism is that the risk of nuclear use is overblown. We tend to look at risk as a function of probability and consequence. Nuclear use is a low-probability, high-consequence event and therefore risk remains significant. It is true that incidents have not resulted in a detonation since 1945, but we cannot discount the possibility. Declassified incidents suggest that there has been a degree of luck, and even if responsible nuclear management fully explains the lack of use since 1945, we still need to update that management to respond to new situations and technological realities.

One concern that is often expressed is that risk reduction is not possible because of the geopolitical environment. Certainly, we face difficult circumstances, but there remains a common desire to prevent accidents, unauthorized use and use caused by miscalculation or misperception. This has been discussed in the dialogue between the five permanent members of the Security Council, and reflects the Group of Seven notion of strategic risk reduction and the measures that were put in place during the cold war. One positive sign is that lots of attention has been given to enhancing mutual understanding, including in the forms I just discussed and in the Conference.

Another concern might be that risk reduction is too global an issue for a contextual or a regional approach. I would say that regional and global focuses are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Risk reduction will require activities at multiple levels. Nuclear issues do not exist in a vacuum but require the consideration of security circumstances in

particular contexts. Ultimately, we are looking to identify practical, feasible and contextually appropriate risk reduction measures for those circumstances.

Finally, one fundamental concern is that risk reduction is a status quo endeavour that distracts us from the greater goal of nuclear disarmament. I would say that risk reduction cannot be pursued without nuclear disarmament in mind. Again, the risk of use will exist for as long as nuclear weapons do. Actually, risk reduction is all the more valuable, given the difficulties of the environment and its potential to help rebuild trust and confidence, allowing practical cooperation and regular engagement in a way that can foster and facilitate disarmament progress.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Wilfred Wan for his presentation. We have now listened to all our panellists and would like to thank them for their very thoughtful and very substantive presentations and contributions. Now I will open the floor for delegates who wish to share their comments on the panellists' presentations and on agenda item 2. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me first thank the panellists for their presentations. I think they were quite informative. Mr. President, this is not the first time I have spoken on fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) issues since the United States completed its review of the proposed treaty in the spring of 2018.

Let me recall that this review concluded that the United States continues to support the commencement of negotiations on an FMCT, provided that the negotiations are governed by consensus and that all key States participate. The Conference on Disarmament meets these criteria. In fact, one of the primary reasons the Conference has been able to achieve success in the past is precisely because it is a forum that operates under these conditions. This ensures that all States can protect vital national security equities during negotiations. Given the sensitive nature of FMCT negotiations, consensus-based decision-making remains essential to any process. Could these conditions be replicated elsewhere? Perhaps. After all, the tremendous reductions in nuclear weapons that we've accomplished over decades were the result of treaties negotiated outside the Conference. But it's fair to assume that such a path for an FMCT would mean far fewer States at the negotiating table.

Mr. President, one of the essential steps towards the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons is an end to the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, which is the principal objective of an FMCT. Negotiating an FMCT also remains a key component of the global non-proliferation and disarmament agenda. For those reasons, it is more than disappointing that the Conference has been unable to begin this much-needed step for so many years. This failure to start FMCT negotiations is not for want of trying on our part. The United States has joined an almost global chorus in calling for the early commencement of FMCT negotiations. A number of countries, including the United States, have put forward creative solutions to break the stalemate on beginning such negotiations, which has now lasted two decades. Conference Presidents have also proposed draft programmes of work that included a mandate for FMCT negotiations. In addition, the General Assembly established a Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the use of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, followed by a high-level FMCT expert preparatory group. Useful, if not conclusive, discussions in those groups laid important groundwork for FMCT negotiations. We also welcomed the focus on an FMCT last year in the subsidiary body chaired by Ambassador Gabriëlse of the Netherlands, as well as in a statement issued by the five permanent members of the Security Council during the 2018 session of the First Committee in New York, reaffirming our support for negotiating an FMCT "in a framework acceptable to all".

In spite of these efforts, however, FMCT negotiations in the Conference have not moved forward because of continued opposition from some countries. This lack of progress on FMCT cannot be attributed to some inherent failing by the Conference. Indeed, it reflects differences in substance. A select few countries continued to see the need to increase their stocks of fissile material for nuclear weapons, or at least to maintain the option to do so in the future, even as they express support for negotiations. Some colleagues may remember that when I spoke on this issue in this chamber last year, I pointed to actions

in formally blocking negotiations by China and Pakistan, either together or individually, in 1999, 2007 and 2009.

Mr. President, one of the essential steps required for making progress on an FMCT, and nuclear disarmament more generally, is a moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. While most States possessing nuclear weapons claim to support the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations, this support should be manifested not just in words or statements, but in an outward and visible way. A moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is one such concrete demonstration of commitment. For its part, the United States remains committed to maintaining its unilateral moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons that has been in effect since the early 1990s. The United Kingdom, France and Russia currently have similar moratoriums in place. As an interim measure to advance the purpose of an FMCT pending negotiation of the treaty, the United States reiterates its calls on all States that have not yet done so to declare a moratorium on such production immediately. Such a step is an example of the type of “effective measure”, within the meaning of Article VI of the NPT, that would help create an environment conducive to future nuclear disarmament. The harsh truth is that FMCT negotiations will not begin until the remaining key States are prepared to cap their stocks of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, when we finally start FMCT negotiations, we will not be starting from a blank slate. Significant progress has already been made in addressing existing stocks in the absence of an FMCT. These include the steps taken by the United States, starting in the mid-1990s, to remove 374 metric tons of highly enriched uranium (HEU) and 61.5 metric tons of plutonium from use in nuclear weapons. In addition, we have downblended more than 162 metric tons of HEU to low-enriched uranium (LEU) for civilian use. These are but a few of the tangible steps we have already taken to reduce the amount of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, and none of that progress would have been possible if we had insisted on linking such steps to the negotiation of an FMCT.

How would FMCT negotiations proceed, in our view? The United States continues to support negotiations in the Conference on the basis of the Shannon mandate, which we see as providing the point of departure for what can be discussed in negotiations. The principal purpose of an FMCT, as it has been understood over the years, is first and foremost to prohibit the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons in order to cap current stockpiles. This outcome alone would be an extremely significant contribution to strengthening our non-proliferation efforts. It would also help improve the security environment in ways conducive to further steps on nuclear disarmament. At the same time, while the United States remains opposed to including existing stockpiles of fissile material in an FMCT, we are open to new and creative proposals for a negotiating mandate, so long as that mandate does not prejudge the outcome by calling for the inclusion of existing stocks.

Mr. President, the fact that FMCT negotiations have been in limbo for more than two decades is ample proof that FMCT negotiations and nuclear disarmament are an integral part of the broader – and regrettably deteriorating – international security environment, not separate from it. A modest step in addressing this environment, and setting the stage for successful FMCT negotiations, would be a demonstration of commitment to end the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. To that end, I reiterate our call for all those who have not declared and maintained a moratorium on such production to take that step now.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for his statement. I now call on the representative of Finland, on behalf of the European Union.

**Ms. Kamppainen (Finland):** Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area, Norway; and Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this thematic discussion on agenda item 2, and our panellists from Morocco, the Netherlands, France and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for their insightful presentations.

The European Union agrees with the importance of keeping the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices high on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. We reiterate that our longstanding priority in the Conference is to immediately commence negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices (FMCT) and we support starting such negotiations in accordance with the document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein.

We welcome the unanimous reaffirmation of this aim by the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group, chaired by Ambassador Heidi Hulan of Canada, which once again demonstrated that FMCT negotiations are long overdue. Further to the work carried out by the Group of Governmental Experts on an FMCT, the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group made substantial progress on possible definitions, scope, verification and legal and institutional arrangements, with a view to elaborating elements for a future treaty.

We invite all States to give due consideration to the expert preparatory group's report and encourage them to participate in dedicated discussions on FMCT in the Conference, building on the work conducted in subsidiary body 2 in 2018 and the working group on the way ahead in 2017. We recall that two issues in particular were recommended for further expert work: first, the elaboration of how the various approaches to verification would work in practice; and second, the assessment of the resource implications associated with the potential elements of the treaty.

We welcome the commitment of all five permanent members of the Security Council to pursue technical discussions related to FMCT in the Conference and we hope that this will help to sustain momentum. We invite all United Nations Member States to demonstrate their strong support for the early start and conclusion of FMCT negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament during the upcoming session of the First Committee of the General Assembly, and we invite all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to reaffirm the urgency of FMCT negotiations at the 2020 Review Conference.

In the meantime, we continue to call on those nuclear-weapon States that have not yet done so and all other States possessing nuclear weapons to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on their production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. This would be an important step to facilitate the commencement of FMCT negotiations and to build confidence, ultimately enhancing global and regional security.

For its part, the European Union continues to provide financial support to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to facilitate the participation of African, Asian and Latin American and Caribbean countries in consultations and other activities related to an FMCT.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Finland for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

**Mr. Davison** (Canada): Thank you, Mr. President. We wish to thank you for organizing this discussion on agenda item 2 and to thank the four panellists for their thoughtful remarks and observations. In particular, I take note of Mr. Wan's comments on risk reduction, which I thought were very useful in expanding our considerations beyond, perhaps, what we mostly talk about, namely the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). I also want to thank Mr. Wan for reminding us of the efforts of the Disarmament Impact Group and the importance of balance in the work of the Conference on Disarmament, not only in terms of our agenda items, but in terms of who comes to speak to us and in clearly demonstrating that expertise on security and disarmament issues is not confined to men alone. Thank you.

There are a range of issues that can be addressed under the item "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters", but for our purposes today, my delegation will

touch on only one: the FMCT. As most Conference members are aware, Canada champions the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations in this forum. We believe that such a treaty would, among other benefits: be a crucial tool for combating horizontal and vertical proliferation by restricting the quantity of fissile material available for use in new or existing nuclear weapons programmes; limit the pool of available fissile material, thereby reducing the risk that terrorist groups or other non-State actors could acquire these materials; advance nuclear disarmament, with the extent of the treaty's impact depending on its scope and verification model; and increase transparency on the fissile material stockpiles held by the five nuclear-weapon States and other States possessing nuclear weapons.

Last year, the General Assembly-mandated high-level FMCT expert preparatory group concluded its meetings by adopting a consensus report intended to help prepare the ground for negotiators by identifying possible elements for a future treaty. The Secretary-General of the United Nations then transmitted the report to the Conference on 18 January 2019. The report is contained in document CD/2152.

As the former Chair of the expert preparatory group explained to the Conference in February 2019, the contents of the report offer, in plain language, a range of considerations for negotiators for the moment when the Conference embarks on an FMCT negotiating process. The report of the expert preparatory group, along with the 2018 report of subsidiary body 2, which focused on an FMCT and is contained in document CD/2139, plus the overwhelming support for the 2018 General Assembly resolution 73/65 on an FMCT, demonstrate the continued importance that the bulk of United Nations Member States and Conference members place on such a treaty. It would have been ideal if the report of the expert preparatory group had acted like a double shot of espresso on the Conference membership, jolting us into concrete action on a long-discussed disarmament priority at the beginning of 2019. But that has not proven to be the case.

Setting aside the possibly mixed benefits of extreme caffeine-induced Conference activity, the truth is that Canada recognizes that there are important concerns that divide the members on how FMCT negotiations might be launched. Subsidiary body 2 helped clarify those differences, while also reaffirming that all members appreciate the positive impact on international security and stability that would come from banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. While acknowledging that these differences on an FMCT have impeded the start of negotiations, Canada believes that the report of the expert preparatory group offers the Conference an additional avenue for action, short of actual negotiations, by undertaking technical work on each of the treaty institutional models described in the report, costing out each option and examining options for treaty verification.

Pursuing such technical work would allow members to engage in substantive discussions on one element of a core agenda item; it would provide a chance to strengthen our knowledge and understanding of what a fissile material treaty would require to be effective; and it would constitute a step on a path to eventual negotiations, without prejudicing the eventual outcome or the national position of any Conference member. In addition, such discussions would help to demonstrate the continued relevance of the Conference.

In closing, we note the commitment given by the nuclear-weapon States at the recent session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference to advance technical work on an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament ahead of the 2020 Review Conference. Nuclear-weapon State engagement on a subject of deep interest to Conference on Disarmament members is significant and we hope will be matched by the other nuclear-weapon-possessing States in this Conference. Canada looks forward to contributing to initiatives in the Conference springing from this commitment.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Canada for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

**Ms. Wood (Australia):** Thank you, Mr. President. I am tempted to say I agree with everything the representative of Canada just said. Thank you to the panellists and also to Wilfred Wan for mentioning the gender toolkit, which indeed is very useful. This body is stronger with diverse voices.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations wrote to the President of the Conference on Disarmament in January transmitting the report of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) expert preparatory group.

In February we listened to an excellent briefing from the Chair of the expert preparatory group, Ambassador Hulan, but apart from that the Conference has not fully examined the report and considered further action as the General Assembly called on us to do in its resolution 73/65 of 2018. We welcome the opportunity to do so now.

I had the privilege of listening to much of the preparatory group's deliberations with our expert. I was struck by the dedication, constructive spirit and level of expertise in the room. Together with the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on an FMCT, the expert preparatory group produced a truly invaluable "how to" guide for when we start negotiations. In addition to setting out various options for treaty elements, without prejudice to national positions, the document provides useful guidance on "considerations" which provide invaluable context for future negotiations. The next logical step is for us to start negotiations in the Conference, using the reports of the Group of Governmental Experts and the expert preparatory group as our tools of trade.

Mr. President, I want to draw attention to a couple of elements in the report of the expert preparatory group. The first refers to the perennial "stocks versus no stocks" issue, which is not a binary issue. It is worth looking closely at paragraph 16 of the report, which covers possible treaty elements related to functional categories of fissile material. Helpfully, it breaks the categories down into "fissile material produced after the entry into force of the treaty"; "fissile material produced prior to the entry into force of the treaty for civilian and non-proscribed purposes"; "fissile material produced prior to entry into force of the treaty that is designated by the concerned State party as excess to nuclear weapons requirements", and "fissile material produced for nuclear weapons prior to entry into force of the treaty". Options are listed under each category. We need to deepen the conversation on stocks and what we mean by that.

We are all familiar with the arguments that a treaty which includes past stocks would further disarmament and non-proliferation, while one which covers future production would be limited to non-proliferation objectives. We see the issue in a more linear way. A cut-off treaty focused on future production would have a significant positive impact on disarmament through measures such as declarations, transparency and confidence-building. These options are covered in the report. Verified assurance that the quantity of fissile material available for use in nuclear weapons is capped is a powerful contribution to confidence, enabling nuclear disarmament. Indeed, a ban on new production of fissile material for use in weapons is a necessary part of disarmament. While reducing the size of weapons arsenals is a useful step toward disarmament, the value of such actions is limited if production of fissile material for weapons continues or could be easily resumed.

So, how does the Conference get closer to being able to negotiate a treaty on fissile material? States can do quite a lot unilaterally and have done so already, as the Ambassador of the United States noted. They can also work together in advance of negotiations to build confidence about the management of fissile material. The report suggests the kinds of mandated and voluntary measures that can help build confidence in an FMCT, including in advance of entry into force. We should not wait to advance exploratory work on some of the necessary verification, transparency and confidence-building measures that could feature in and around any future treaty.

We are encouraged by the statement of the five permanent members of the Security Council at the First Committee last year, and by the statement of China at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference concerning ongoing work by the five permanent members on this issue, and we look forward to this bringing results.

Mr. President, the increasingly complex and challenging international security environment warrants fresh thinking on measures to address new and extant risks of nuclear weapons use. Cold War templates for addressing nuclear risk cannot simply be applied to the complexities of today's security environment. While our ultimate shared goal is disarmament, we also have a shared responsibility to reduce the risk of use of nuclear

weapons. Nuclear-possessor states and non-nuclear-weapon States need to undertake measures that will promote trust-building and confidence. Reducing nuclear risk builds trust and can help pave the way for further reductions in future.

There is a raft of work that we need to take forward, relating to safeguarding procedures and safety, clarifying doctrine, increasing predictability, conflict amelioration and implementing existing non-proliferation and disarmament obligations. We should waste no time or effort in making progress in these important areas. That is why we introduced risk reduction as a key theme of the current cycle of the Disarmament Commission and are supporting the work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

The Conference held useful initial discussions on risk reduction during subsidiary body discussions last year and it might choose to resume them. We are also participating in the risk reduction working group of the Global Enterprise and we look forward to advancing the issue through the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative. We would also like to see strong commitments to implementing risk reduction measures agreed at the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Australia for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

**Mr. Nikolaichik** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to thank the President for convening a special meeting on the issue of the prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters. I would also like to say a few words of gratitude to the Ambassadors of Morocco, the Netherlands and France and to the representative of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for their informative statements.

By renouncing crucial agreements on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, we are continuing to “oil the jaws of the war machine and feed it with our babies”. In these circumstances and on another anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this agenda item is fairly portentous for the Conference. The Conference on Disarmament is a unique platform where all the key players in matters of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are present. In our view, it is inadmissible to waste this platform or not to resume substantive discussions.

Belarus well understands the situation surrounding the agreement banning the production of fissile material. We are prepared to support a consensus on commencing talks and we do not see any other platform apart from the Conference where they could be held. As realists, we consider that, in order to get negotiations going, it is essential to continue to dispel current disagreements about the scope and subject matter to be regulated and we call for in-depth, expert work to that end.

The subsidiary body format, where experts can objectively discuss the basic components of a future agreement, existing differences of opinion and ways of overcoming them, seems to be effective. It enables a balance to be found between security interests and the obligation “to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace”. We call on States to take steps to commence effective expert discussions under agenda item 2 and other agenda items in 2020.

Belarus is convinced that a whole range of multilateral measures is necessary in order effectively to lower the risk of nuclear war. It could include nuclear risk reduction, the improvement of military communications, raising the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons and the gradual cutting back of nuclear arsenals as far as the complete renunciation of nuclear weapons, in line with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

All these measures are fairly closely interrelated with agenda items 1, 4 and 7. We consider the suggestion made by several delegations regarding the integrated consideration of agenda items 1, 2 and 4 to be a sound one.

Belarus experienced two world wars in the twentieth century as well the Chernobyl nuclear power station disaster. These tragedies make us acutely aware of the impending danger of an escalation of a third global conflict which our civilization might not survive.

Hence we urge you not to raise the stakes, not to undermine existing formats, hoping that the “best deal” will come about, but without delay to begin in-depth, comprehensive preparatory work, including at the Conference. All the more so, since we have very little time, at best two minutes to midnight, measured in terms of human civilization.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan):** Thank you very much, Mr. President. I would like to begin by thanking you for organizing this meeting on agenda item 2, “Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters”. We also appreciate and thank the four distinguished panellists for their remarks and contributions, especially Mr. Wilfred Wan from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. Like other speakers before me, I found his inputs and comments very valuable.

Mr. President, I will divide my statement into two parts. The first will refer to the prevention of nuclear war and the second to the issue of fissile material. I will then conclude with some remarks in response to some of the comments that we have heard from the floor.

On agenda item 2, let me recall that in 1978, in its first special session devoted to disarmament, the General Assembly declared by consensus that, “all States, in particular nuclear-weapon States, should consider as soon as possible various proposals designed to secure the avoidance of the use of nuclear weapons, the prevention of nuclear war and related objectives, where possible through international agreement, and thereby ensure that the survival of mankind is not endangered”.

Although the relevance of this issue seems to have receded in the post-cold-war period, it is again starting to gain prominence in the contemporary strategic setting. With the deteriorating international and regional security environment, a renewed focus on the prevention of nuclear war would contribute to building confidence between States and would enhance regional and global strategic stability.

The prevention of nuclear war and nuclear risk reduction measures need to be considered in a broad perspective, in terms of how to prevent war in general, also taking into account the threats emanating from conventional armed forces and doctrines and new types of destabilizing weapon systems.

Mr. President, Pakistan views nuclear weapons strictly in the context of deterring all forms of aggression in order to ensure its security. We remain open to any bilateral or multilateral initiative on arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament that is equitable and results in equal and undiminished security for all the concerned States. We have consistently affirmed our willingness to consider further measures for confidence-building, risk reduction and the avoidance of an arms race in our region, and we have made several proposals in that regard.

On the issue of fissile material, our consistent position is well-known and remains unchanged. It is based on the following overarching principles. First, the treaty should provide equal and undiminished security for all States, a principle recognized in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Second, the Treaty should contribute both to the objectives of nuclear disarmament and to non-proliferation in all its aspects. Third, in addition to a ban on future production, the treaty must also cover the past production of fissile material, in order to address the asymmetries in fissile material holdings at the regional and global levels. Fourth, the treaty should neither discriminate between the nuclear-weapon States nor between the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. All States parties should assume equal obligations without any preferential treatment for any category of States. Fifth, the treaty should be free from any loopholes and should encompass all types of fissile material usable in nuclear weapons, covering not only future production and existing stocks, but also their potential transfer from one State party to another. Sixth, the treaty should include a robust verification mechanism, implemented by a representative and independent body under the adequate oversight of States parties. Seventh, the treaty should promote regional and global stability and enhance confidence amongst all States parties. Eighth, the treaty should not

affect the inalienable right of all States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under effective safeguards preventing diversion for prohibited purposes. And lastly, the treaty should be negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

The Conference includes all relevant stakeholders and strictly operates under the consensus rule, allowing each member State to safeguard its vital interests. A treaty negotiated outside the Conference will lack legitimacy and ownership, much like the pseudo-progress that is sought through General Assembly-led divisive processes such as groups of governmental experts and high-level expert preparatory groups.

Mr. President, any arms control, non-proliferation or disarmament treaty that diminishes the security of any State is a non-starter, as evidenced by the failure to initiate negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). No country can be expected to enter into negotiations on a treaty that would be detrimental to its national security, as was the case when a large group of countries refused to engage with the negotiations on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, launched outside the Conference, and with many other negotiations launched within the Conference, including on nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, negative security assurances and an international convention to combat biological and chemical terrorism.

Pakistan believes that a treaty which only results in a cut-off in the production of fissile material – as interpreted under the Shannon mandate, at least by the possessors of nuclear weapons – would contribute little to nuclear disarmament. It would jeopardize the security of Pakistan unless it addressed the vast asymmetries in existing stocks of fissile material.

This situation has been further compounded by a blatant disregard for non-proliferation norms and the exercise of double standards for achieving short-sighted political objectives and economic benefits. These double standards are manifest in the granting of inequitable waivers, the conclusion of bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreements and the continued pursuit of the creation of additional country-specific exceptions in the non-proliferation and multilateral export control regimes. These discriminatory measures endanger regional strategic stability in South Asia.

Mr. President, among the States that possess nuclear weapons, most have either announced a unilateral moratorium on the production of fissile material or have attained a level of comfort through continued national production and the conclusion of special arrangements. It was only after amassing tons of fissile material – far, far in excess of any foreseeable defence need – that they were converted to the cause of an FMCT. For them, unlike Pakistan, an FMCT is a completely cost-free exercise. A cut-off treaty also would not entail any significant obligation for these States.

For the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, many of which enjoy a so-called nuclear umbrella under extended nuclear deterrence arrangements, an FMCT would not entail any new obligation.

Pakistan stands ready to consider a treaty on fissile material that covers existing stocks. In 2015, we put forward a detailed working paper in the Conference on capturing existing stocks in the treaty's scope in a practical and meaningful manner. It would ensure that, in addition to a ban on future production, existing fissile material stocks would not be used for manufacturing additional nuclear weapons. It also calls for the mutual and balanced reduction of stocks on a regional or global basis to address their existing asymmetries. Such a treaty would genuinely promote nuclear disarmament, arrest vertical proliferation and contribute to regional and global security and stability.

The Shannon mandate contained in document CD/1299 does not guarantee the inclusion of existing stocks in the treaty's scope. From what we have repeatedly heard from other nuclear-weapon-possessing States, this is precisely their preference in order to perpetuate their strategic advantage. These States clearly prefer a treaty that only prohibits future production, not just as a matter of their national preference, but based on their interpretation of what in their view is a multilaterally agreed negotiating mandate.

Pakistan therefore cannot join any discussion, pre-negotiation, negotiation or preparatory work on the basis of the Shannon mandate. This mandate has clearly outlived its utility and validity as the basis for substantive work on a treaty.

Mr. President, major divergences continue to persist on the most fundamental aspects of the treaty's objective and scope. These divergences need to be resolved, before the commencement of negotiations, to the satisfaction of all parties.

Since many delegations and the panellists referred to the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group, I also wish to put on record our position on this matter. In 2016, Pakistan voted against General Assembly resolution 71/259 which established this expert group. We had earnestly engaged with the three lead sponsors to arrive at a consensus text, but regrettably our key concerns were not addressed. Accordingly, as with the previous Group of Governmental Experts on an FMCT that worked in 2014 and 2015, Pakistan decided not to participate in the expert preparatory group. I would like to briefly elaborate on the three overriding considerations that guided this decision.

First was the issue of its mandate. The group had been mandated to "consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of a future non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable 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".

As I mentioned, document CD/1299, also known as the Shannon mandate, has outlived its utility and validity. It would only skew the negotiations towards an outcome that would contribute little to nuclear disarmament or to regional and international stability, to the detriment of our national security. It is ambiguous on addressing the issue of fissile material stockpiles and their asymmetries, which are being exacerbated by the discriminatory policies of certain countries. That is not acceptable to us because of our security situation, as I have explained. We could not join an expert preparatory group that based its work on such a flawed document.

Second was the issue of composition. All States possessing nuclear weapons are direct stakeholders and face the greatest impact of a treaty on fissile material. Their participation in any international effort dealing with fissile material is indispensable and imperative. While Pakistan has chosen not to be a part of this expert preparatory group, several other Conference member States with significant nuclear capabilities are also not represented in it. We feel that only the Conference has the ideal composition for considering the issue of fissile material on a consensus basis.

Third was the question of repeating an approach that has proved to be a failure. The report of the previous Group of Governmental Experts revealed the vastly divergent positions on each and every aspect of the treaty, but most importantly on its objectives and scope. Without resolving these two fundamentally critical issues, there can be no forward movement on other closely interlinked elements, as became evident once again in the final report of the expert preparatory group. Without any change for the better in the realities on the ground or any change in the strongly held positions of other major stakeholders, the group was always bound to meet the same fate as the previous Group of Governmental Experts. Its terms of reference did not allow it to address the underlying fundamental concerns that are actually preventing the start of treaty negotiations in the Conference and hence it failed to contribute in that regard.

Based on these considerations, Pakistan is not in a position to accept any conclusions or recommendations produced by the expert preparatory group. We reject its final report. It can in no way constitute the basis for further consideration of this issue by the international community, whether inside or outside the Conference. We regret that this group was established by a vote and that a deliberate decision was taken to persist with a divisive approach aimed at seeking pseudo-progress towards a contentious treaty with unclear objectives and contested scope.

Progress on an FMCT cannot be achieved by changing the format or forum or by imposing solutions that exclude the views of major stakeholders. We also need to seriously consider the negative effects on the treaty's prospects generated by misguided policies of

selectivity, discrimination and double standards. The issue needs to be viewed in the broader security and strategic context.

Lastly, Mr. President, I wish to respond to the remarks by the distinguished Ambassador of the United States, in which he referred to Pakistan “blocking” FMCT negotiations in the Conference on multiple occasions. As you have noted, I went to great lengths in trying to explain our position but in response to those remarks, I wish to draw attention to some critical points.

First, let me emphasize that Pakistan is only opposed to a treaty that bans the future production of fissile material: a cut-off only treaty. We are not opposed to a treaty that broadly covers fissile material, including past production and existing stocks. We know for a fact that the United States, like its other nuclear-weapon State allies, promotes and advocates a cut-off only treaty. But let me restate and reemphasize, we stand ready to join negotiations on a treaty that explicitly includes existing stocks.

Let me explain why this position is absolutely critical for Pakistan. First, because of its very serious impact on our national security and regional stability. We are witnessing – all of you are witnessing – aggressive policies and a military build-up in our neighbourhood. Many Western countries are directly responsible for this state of affairs. Second, because discrimination is only worsening. The discriminatory approach and double standards applied through the Nuclear Suppliers Group and bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreements are worsening the asymmetry. They are freeing up existing domestic uranium for use in nuclear weapons programmes by allowing uranium sales from abroad that can be used in nuclear power plants. This is in addition to other defence sales and defence cooperation. We call on the United States to live up to its role, as a country bearing special responsibility for international peace and security, to arrest this trend and not be a direct part of this discriminatory approach. The third reason refers to the broader debate about what are we trying to achieve – disarmament or non-proliferation – through the treaty. Unless and until existing stocks are included in the treaty’s scope, it will merely be a horizontal non-proliferation instrument. And I honestly ask other countries, including those that are genuinely committed to nuclear disarmament, and which are supporters of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, whether they want a treaty that only bans the future production of fissile material.

The treaty is currently crafted in a way that only targets Pakistan, so we do not mind taking a position alone or blocking negotiations on it, because it concerns our national security interest. Other countries that are in similar situations take the exact same position on issues that affect their national security interest.

One last point, and I say this with all due respect, is that it is very bold for a country like the United States to call out others for blocking treaty negotiations. This is a country that opposes negotiations on every single issue in the Conference: nuclear disarmament, prevention of an arms race in outer space, prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, negative security assurances, a convention to combat nuclear, chemical and biological terrorism, lethal autonomous weapon systems and cybersecurity. It did not join the negotiations on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. I have not even mentioned those treaties from which the United States is regularly accused of withdrawing.

Our position is strictly based on our national security interest and we are very constructive in trying to engage with the Conference to find a solution to address that. I reaffirm and reiterate my delegation’s readiness to find a consensus-based solution that is not based on finger-pointing and trying to blame others for the deadlock, but that genuinely brings everyone on board to make forward progress.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Germany.

**Mr. Beerwerth** (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening the meeting today on agenda item 2. I would also like to thank the panellists for their insightful presentations and inspiring thoughts.

Mr. President, last year the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) expert preparatory group agreed on a very substantial consensus report. It was subsequently

endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 73/65 and transmitted to the Conference on Disarmament for examination. In February 2019, the Chair of the group, Ambassador Heidi Hulan, gave an impressive briefing on its report. In our view, important progress in facilitating the start of negotiations on an FMCT has been achieved with this consensus report. We welcome the report as a significant contribution that the Conference should build upon.

As members of the Conference, we must do all we can to preserve and develop the architecture of nuclear arms control. Let us recognize that stagnation can turn into erosion. On an FMCT, we have been delaying negotiations for far too long. An FMCT would be pivotal in advancing non-proliferation objectives and at the same time bringing about important transparency and confidence-building measures in support of disarmament.

Different views on certain aspects must not prevent us from moving ahead, but should be reconciled during the negotiations. This includes, among other things, the contentious issue of whether the treaty should address existing stocks of weapons-grade fissile material. Bringing such questions to the negotiating table will allow for an in-depth discussion, during which every participating State will have the opportunity to ensure that their security interests are taken into account. As we have said very often, these differences should not prevent us from entering into negotiations in which a consensus outcome is needed.

We strongly welcome the commitment of the five permanent members of the Security Council to engage in discussions related to an FMCT and look forward to them sharing the outcomes with all other Conference members.

In closing, Mr. President, I would like to emphasize that it is high time that we start negotiations on a treaty.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

**Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*):** Mr. President: My delegation and I have listened carefully to the statements of the four panellists, and those speeches were very enlightening.

Today, for the first time, the Conference on Disarmament has held a thematic discussion on issues related to a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). We have listened carefully to the statements of other delegations, and many of their views will also be reflected in my own statement. When the Ambassador of the United States was speaking just now, I felt that I agreed with and supported a great many of his views on the negotiation of an FMCT. But I also regret to note that in his statement today, he again mentioned China by name and said that China had blocked FMCT negotiations. I am therefore obliged to make it clear here that China has never blocked the commencement of negotiations on an FMCT in the Conference, and I would also like to take this opportunity to urge the United States Ambassador not to use such a subjective and untruthful approach in judging the policies and positions of China.

I have three points to share with you. First, negotiations on an FMCT can and must be conducted only in the Conference on Disarmament. This will be the fundamental guarantee of the authority, universality and effectiveness of an FMCT. It is the composition of the Conference's membership and the Conference's rules of procedure that have been the primary factors enabling it to become the sole multilateral mechanism for disarmament negotiations. The member States of the Conference include countries with military significance in all regions of the world, and all stakeholders in nuclear arms control and disarmament are members of the Conference as well. It is also the Conference's consensus-based rules of procedure that have ensured that the important security interests and concerns of all member States can be fully guaranteed in the negotiation process.

Take the negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, held here more than 20 years ago, as an example. Once the negotiations were officially launched, all the stakeholders, as members of the Conference on Disarmament, participated in the negotiation of the Treaty in a very serious, responsible and professional manner. A consensus was reached on the text of the Treaty through a process of arduous, patient and

meticulous negotiation involving repeated compromises, and the major security concerns of all parties were addressed as a result. This was a valuable experience that ensured the success of the Treaty's negotiation. The fact that I was personally involved in that entire negotiation process has afforded me a fuller understanding of that process and affected me deeply. For major multilateral nuclear arms-control treaties such as the Test-Ban Treaty and FMCT, the Conference is an irreplaceable negotiation mechanism for ensuring the instruments' quality, weight and significance.

For this reason, China, the five nuclear-weapon States and many other member States firmly believe that the Conference is the only appropriate place to negotiate and conclude an FMCT, and most member States of the Conference, including China, will not agree to setting up a new forum. Nor could China possibly agree to accede to any important international arms-control and disarmament treaty if it has not taken part in the drafting and negotiation process.

Many colleagues have mentioned the issue of a production moratorium in their statements today, and I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the position of China on this issue. In our view, a moratorium on production is not the fundamental path to completely and effectively resolving the FMCT issue. Especially in this day and age, what some countries affirm today they may deny tomorrow, and a current administration can arbitrarily repudiate all the policies and commitments made by a previous one, leaving the international community at an even greater loss as to what course to take. Therefore, the fundamental way to resolve the FMCT issue is to negotiate and conclude an FMCT treaty in the Conference. China will support such negotiations, as it always has in the past.

My second point is that the Shannon mandate is an important basis for starting FMCT negotiations. The Conference has been mulling over the negotiation of an FMCT for many years. After the conclusion of the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the members of the Conference intensified efforts to find ways to start FMCT negotiations. At that time, I personally experienced this process here, in this chamber.

It should be stated that the Shannon mandate is a valuable consensus, reached by all parties over a long period of effort, and is the greatest common denominator of their positions. The core of this mandate is to realize the arms-control objective of banning the new production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices through a multilateral, non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable FMCT. It should be noted that the political, security-interest and technical-concept foundations of the consensus reached by all parties at the time are still important and valid, having remained fundamentally unchanged with the passage of time.

China believes that all parties in the Conference should continue to follow this important consensus and focus on its important objectives as outlined, fully considering the complex political, military, security, technological and other factors entailed in the negotiations, taking full account of the legitimate security concerns of all parties and their right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and considering the effectiveness, inclusiveness and feasibility of the treaty in a balanced way, and they should then discuss them appropriately on this basis and deal with such specific issues as the scope, definition, verification mechanism and conditions for the entry into force of the treaty. As equal members of the Conference, all parties may also put forward new views and opinions at any time in the Conference process, along with their own concerns and understandings. On the basis of equality and mutual respect, they can gradually increase trust, reduce differences and expand their common understanding, and achieve a treaty text on the basis of the consensus principle.

My third point is that the Conference on Disarmament should carry out substantive work on such important topics as the negotiations on an FMCT, which the Conference has long been unable to initiate. The responsibility lies not in the Conference mechanism itself and its rules of procedure, nor even in the member States of the Conference. If the start of negotiations on major international arms-control treaties is fundamentally dependent on the political will of all parties, it should also be noted that the political will of all parties concerned is itself determined by the international environment and historical context. The

development and evolution of the international political and security situation are like the very atmosphere that surrounds us.

Over the past two decades, the international political security situation and relations among the major powers have been undergoing profound and complex changes, and the military and security strategies of some major powers are also undergoing important readjustments. For example, since the beginning of this year and even last week, the members of the Conference have witnessed once again major adjustments in the nuclear arms-control and disarmament policies of a major power, along with the serious impact of such adjustments on the process of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, which will continue to produce far-reaching effects. These are the realities we need to face.

Even though the international situation before us is complex and the political conditions for the Conference to start treaty negotiations on various important topics may not be fully mature yet, as member States of the Conference, we should no longer sit idly by and allow this unique multilateral disarmament negotiation mechanism to run in neutral gear indefinitely. The revitalization of the Conference is the professional duty of every delegation and colleague present here, and it is also our primary mission for maintaining multilateralism and ensuring the status and effectiveness of the Conference.

I would also like to stress that, after years of unremitting efforts, the Conference has already achieved a solid foundation, broad prospects and great significance in carrying out substantive work on major and prominent issues, including the FMCT negotiations. As for the negotiation of an FMCT, the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts established in 2013 and the United Nations high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group established in 2017 have carried out a great deal of in-depth substantive and professional work in that regard, and the reports of the two expert groups constitute an important and rich foundation for the further substantive work of the Conference. I would also very much like to thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands here for his important efforts on the issue of FMCT negotiations in the subsidiary body established by the Conference last year.

What I would especially like to remind everyone of is that the way in which the aforementioned expert groups carry out their work also provides an important reference for the next stage of the Conference's work. For example, my predecessor, Ambassador Fu Cong, and his colleagues took part in the work of the United Nations high-level expert preparatory group. From the introduction to their report, we can see that the working style of this group of experts was equal and open, and the attitude of all parties participating in the work of the expert group was candid and pragmatic. I would like to take this opportunity to quote two paragraphs from the introduction of the report of the expert group. Here, I think their working methods are very enlightening for our work.

*(spoke in English)*

In the introduction, paragraph 5 reads:

As suggested by its name, the Preparatory Group, while focusing on preparing for future treaty negotiations, considered and made recommendations on substantial elements of a future non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable 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. To do so, experts developed a concise, plain-language menu of potential treaty elements that would facilitate the task of future negotiators. Where lists of options exist in this report, they should be understood to reflect the full range of views expressed on a future treaty but not to imply in any way agreement on any individual option. Since these preparatory discussions did not constitute negotiations, no attempt was made to narrow this range of substantive options, or resolve the political obstacles preventing negotiation of a treaty. Additionally, experts were able to build on the work of the Group of Governmental Experts by further elaborating a number of issues including the legal and institutional considerations related to a future treaty.

Paragraph 6 reads:

Experts agreed that this report should be read in conjunction with the report of the Group of Governmental Experts as contained in document A/70/81, which was the starting point for the Preparatory Group's work. The Preparatory Group was mindful not to repeat its content nor reopen the consensus already achieved in that context. Throughout deliberations, experts also avoided replaying debates that underpinned the Group of Governmental Experts' findings. This helped maximize the short time available to the Preparatory Group, and ultimately led it to produce a menu of potential treaty elements and achieve agreed recommendations that may help lay important groundwork for future negotiations. Both are presented without prejudice to national positions or the emergence of other elements prior to or during negotiations.

*(spoke in Chinese)*

The reason why I want to quote and read over this content again with you here, is that I think the approach of this expert preparatory group itself is very enlightening for our Conference as we continue to carry out our substantive work on the FMCT negotiations issue going forward. Of course, the Conference's substantive expert-level discussion should be based not only on these two reports, but also on all the positions, views, opinions and suggestions that have been put forward in the past and may be put forward in the future by the member States of the Conference.

Mr. President, the Chinese delegation and I personally are willing to join all parties in continuing efforts to achieve a comprehensive, balanced and practical programme of work and to arrange for the Conference to begin substantive work as soon as possible on all important topics, including the FMCT negotiations, with a view to laying a solid basis for relevant negotiations in the future.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Cleobury** (United Kingdom): Mr. President, first, let me thank you for organizing this debate and our panellists for their contributions. The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to add a few words setting out our national position on fissile material.

The United Kingdom has had a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices since 1995. In 1998, we were the first nuclear-weapon State to declare the total size of our fissile material stocks and voluntarily place all fissile material no longer required for defence purposes under international safeguards where, to this day, it continues to be liable to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Since then, all enrichment and reprocessing in the United Kingdom has been conducted under international safeguards.

Our commitment to begin negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) is clear. In 2016, we submitted a draft proposal for a programme of work and an associated working group where we supported the provision for FMCT issues to be included. We supported the creation of the five subsidiary bodies in 2018 and we took an active role in the two series of consensus-based expert meetings chaired by Canada to deepen the dialogue on an FMCT.

During our 2019 presidency of the Conference, we tabled a draft decision that would have taken forward this work and helped move the Conference closer to developing and negotiating mandates on its four core agenda items. We will continue our efforts to get the Conference back to work.

Mr. President, we continue to support the immediate commencement of negotiations of an FMCT in this Conference and we will work actively with other States to explore ways of moving forward. This includes working with the permanent members of the Security Council, through the P5 process chaired by the United Kingdom, up until the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

As several delegations have already noted in the discussion so far, as part of our programme of work for this year, the five permanent members of the Security Council will hold expert-level discussions on an FMCT.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

**Mr. Takamizawa (Japan):** Thank you, Mr. President, I would like to thank you, Ambassador Duong, for organizing these substantive discussions on the four core issues, including on agenda item 2 today.

First, please allow me to touch upon the basics. Since the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945, respectively, a vision for a safer world free of nuclear weapons has been a shared goal of the international community. As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during a war, Japan has a deep understanding of the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, it is also a solemn responsibility of a sovereign State to protect the lives and property of its people. Japan strives to advance nuclear disarmament and security simultaneously, taking into account both humanitarian and security considerations. Against this backdrop, we must reassume realistic measures with the cooperation of all States while recognizing the highly challenging character of the global security environment.

Many initiatives are under way for implementing past commitments on a unilateral or bilateral basis. As Mr. Wan mentioned, the Creating the Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative, the Global Enterprise initiative and the Stockholm Ministerial Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament and the NPT all deal with similar topics in the context of efforts towards the 2020 NPT Review Conference and beyond.

Japan has focused and will continue to focus on a wide range of concrete steps, such as more transparent and responsible declaratory policies, measures to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in doctrines and policies, measures to enhance transparency and reduce the risk of use of nuclear weapons, and the strengthening of negative security assurances. In addition, we are committed to working on nuclear disarmament verification and addressing issues related to fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

After hearing Mr. Wan's presentation, it is clear that there are many potential nuclear risks and three or four concerns with regard to nuclear risk reduction. Japan is in a position to support the activities of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and to work hard on risk reduction measures.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to briefly discuss and respond to issues related to the panellists' presentations and the points raised by colleagues today here in the Council Chamber. I would like to focus on just two points.

First, with regard to existing stocks of fissile material, I think that the report of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) expert preparatory group answers the question of how to control and manage stocks. As is well reflected in the report, concrete and technical consideration should be given, in the course of the negotiations, to each category of stocks and how to manage them. This consideration would enable us to respond to questions such as which categories of stocks should be covered by a treaty. Moreover, in relation to stocks, transparency and confidence-building measures should be explored. In this regard, it is worth exploring the inclusion in the treaty of preambular language encouraging States to undertake voluntary measures to draw down stockpiles of fissile material.

My second point relates to effective verification and the resource issue, which has been raised by the European Union representative. We should not only stress the importance of cost effectiveness, but should also seek a higher level of verification mechanism. In the report of the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group, reference was made to the view that if the definitions in the treaty are too broad, extensive and complex verification would be required and significant verification costs would be generated. However, we believe that definitions and verification should be treated separately, instead

of limiting the ban on fissile material production based on what can presently be verified, given costs, current technologies and the materials and activities to be prohibited. We should first consider the scope of prohibition, based on the object and purpose of the treaty. Only then should consideration be given to cost-benefit analysis and technologies in order to specify what can practically be subject to verification.

This approach takes precedence in the case of safeguards in non-nuclear-weapon States under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. From a cost-benefit perspective, it is important to make full use of the expertise of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

**Ms. Choi Soonhee** (Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to join other colleagues in thanking you for organizing today's thematic discussion. I appreciate the comprehensive and thoughtful presentations of all of today's panellists.

I would like to very briefly reiterate our national position on the issue of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). As my delegation has stressed repeatedly, if the Conference on Disarmament is sincere and serious about advancing nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war, this august body should give priority to commencing FMCT negotiation at the earliest possible opportunity. I believe that all the necessary groundwork is already in place, including the excellent report of the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group. In this vein, my delegation believes that we have to focus our energy in the Conference, as an immediate task, on establishing a separate dedicated working group or subsidiary body on this issue in 2020, given that it is not realistic for such a working group to be established this year. While it seems that the Conference's methodology has recently defined and limited what it can discuss and achieve, my delegation is flexible on how we should establish such a subsidiary body. The most important thing is that we need to devote our energy and time to negotiating an FMCT as soon as possible. My delegation believes that the Conference's methodology should be guided by that objective and a sense of urgency.

In support of international efforts in this regard, my Government has decided to become a supporter of the relevant action of the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. Korea hopes that cooperation on this issue with other partners, including Canada, can be strengthened and expanded, especially in the Asia and the Pacific region.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States.

**Ms. Plath** (United States of America): First, let me turn to my colleague from Pakistan and caution him against making such unfounded and aggressive accusations against the United States or "Western countries" for the destabilizing security situation in his region, or indeed for what sounded like the broader ills of the world at large.

The United States has and continues to live up to its responsibility as a nuclear-weapon State and it reminds the representative of Pakistan that it is his own country, not the United States, that continues to so blatantly block any constructive discussion of negotiation on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) in this body, as his very detailed statement made patently clear. Attempts to deflect from Pakistan's own responsibility for further legitimate disarmament efforts by conflating and convoluting stated United States positions on larger unrelated security issues are disingenuous, to say the least.

To the Ambassador of China, I believe that Ambassador Wood's statement very clearly spoke for itself and was not subjective at all, but highly factual in recalling the recent history of FMCT discussions in the Conference on Disarmament, including the blocking by China of the Ad Hoc Committee in 2009, obviously hoping to link it to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as it continues to do. I disagree with Ambassador Li that a moratorium is unnecessary. In fact, it is a fundamental demonstrative trust-building measure that any State serious about negotiating an FMCT should, at a minimum, be able to support. China is the only nuclear-weapon State without such a moratorium.

Mr. President, in the world of arms control and disarmament, and indeed the world at large, actions speak louder than words.

**The President:** I thank the representative of the United States. I now give the floor to the representative of India.

**Ms. Bhandari (India):** Thank you very much, Mr. President. The delegation of India would like to express its appreciation to you for convening a panel discussion on item 2 of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament in today's plenary meeting. We would also like to thank the distinguished ambassadors of Morocco, the Netherlands and France and the representative of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for their informative presentations.

Mr. President, without diminishing in any way the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament, the delegation of India supports the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. Like others, we will also assess the outcome of these negotiations from the perspective of our national security.

India was one of the original co-sponsors of General Assembly resolution 48/75L, adopted by consensus in 1993, which envisaged an FMCT as a significant contribution to nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects. The resolution clearly reflected a common understanding of the objective of concluding a universal, non-discriminatory and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

India joined the consensus on the Shannon report in 1995 and on the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on an FMCT in the Conference in 1998. Similarly, we did not stand in the way of consensus on the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/1864 in May 2009, which provided for the establishment of a working group on an FMCT as part of the Conference's programme of work.

The position of India on an FMCT has therefore been clear and consistent since 1993. We believe that the mandate previously agreed by this forum and contained in document CD/1299 remains valid and relevant today and continues to command strong support from the international community.

The support of India for FMCT negotiations in the Conference is consistent with its interest in strengthening the global non-proliferation regime, which would add a measure of strategic predictability as a baseline for future global nuclear disarmament efforts.

In recent years, India has participated actively and constructively in both the Group of Governmental Experts on an FMCT and the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group. The report of the Group of Governmental Experts clearly underlined that the treaty and its negotiation in the Conference remains a priority enjoying broad international support and that document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein remains the most suitable basis for the commencement of further negotiations. In our view, that was the most significant conclusion of the Group of Governmental Experts.

To conclude, Mr. President, the delegation of India would like to reiterate its commitment to joining the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference on a universal, non-discriminatory and internationally and effectively verifiable FMCT on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. We sincerely hope that the Conference will not be further prevented from commencing such negotiations in accordance with the agreed mandate.

It is unfortunate that the commencement of negotiations has been blocked for more than a decade now, on cited grounds that remain unconvincing. What we have heard today is merely the repetition of the same, oft-cited points, which does not add to their credibility.

Blocking the work of the Conference by citing extraneous reasons does disservice to the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The point has often been made that any concerns that delegations may have can be taken up during the negotiations in the Conference. We hope that the Conference will be allowed to move forward with the commencement of FMCT negotiations without delay.

**The President:** I thank the representative of India. Now, I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

**Mr. Elsayed** (Egypt): Thank you, Mr. President. I thank you, first, for organizing this debate on agenda item 2, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". My thanks are extended to the distinguished panellists – the permanent representatives of Morocco, the Netherlands and France and Mr. Wan from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research – for their contribution to this discussion.

Mr. President, there are several issues that can and should be discussed under this agenda item, although it seems that its centre of gravity is the issue of fissile material. On this specific issue, Egypt strongly believes that the Conference on Disarmament should start negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable legally binding instrument banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

In accordance with document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, such an instrument should fulfil both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. This can never be properly done if fissile material stocks are excluded from its scope. An instrument that only bans future production is not a priority and will not represent any significant contribution to the goal of nuclear disarmament.

The 13 practical steps adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference included a call to negotiate such a treaty in the Conference, yet for 19 years after the adoption of the 13 practical steps, this call has gone unheeded.

Mr. President, Egypt has participated actively and constructively in all recent endeavours devoted to making progress on this issue, including the work of the Group of Governmental Experts mandated pursuant to resolution 67/53, the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group and the Conference's subsidiary body 2 in 2018.

Egypt stands ready to contribute to any future efforts that may lead to progress on this issue and is looking forward to pursuing this goal in the Conference within the framework of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that accommodates all the priorities of its member States.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Egypt. Now, I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

**Mr. Martínez Ruiz** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, we appreciate the initiative intended to advance the discussion on the agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament. We also wish to express our appreciation for the statements made by the four panellists. We certainly share Ambassador Zniber's vision of dealing with the agenda items in a comprehensive and interrelated manner. From the point of view of Mexico, this approach must consider, as an essential element, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would come of a nuclear detonation and, thus, the urgency of nuclear disarmament.

We listened carefully to the presentations by Ambassadors Gabriëlse and Hwang and agree on the need to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty as soon as possible, while taking the technical considerations into account in accordance with the negotiating mandate of this Conference. We also acknowledge the specific unilateral measures mentioned by France, the United States of America and others to end the production of fissile materials, while bearing in mind that any unilateral effort does not in any way alter the need to negotiate an international instrument on the subject.

We also recognize the value of the work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and appreciate being reminded of the importance of effectively incorporating the gender perspective into disarmament forums, something with which my delegation is in full agreement. We will also give due consideration to the risk-reduction studies.

Mr. President, in order to avoid any type of nuclear warfare, it is crucial that we move towards eliminating this type of weapon. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes. If something does not exist, it cannot proliferate or

cause harm. It is impossible to separate non-proliferation from efforts to achieve and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons. Previous negotiators in this Conference had therefore proposed a course of action that – as an essential and intermediate step compatible with other measures – entailed the prohibition of nuclear testing and of the production of fissile material for bombs and other explosive devices, prior to the elimination of nuclear weapons. My delegation believes that such a course of action was sensible and continues to be valid. The negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was concluded successfully, notwithstanding the subsequent problems associated with its entry into force, but the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty remains outstanding.

My delegation is ready to negotiate, prepared to explore options in a constructive and non-biased manner and open to hearing different positions, as we understand is provided for by the Shannon mandate, for a future legally binding, non-discriminatory and multilateral instrument on fissile material that has an efficient international verification system and is based on the principles of transparency and irreversibility.

Mexico also believes that, if this future treaty is to add value to the disarmament process, it must give consideration to eliminating the stocks currently held by nuclear States in order to achieve the dual objectives of non-proliferation and disarmament.

It is essential to include efficient international verification measures in any treaty in order to establish trust between the parties, especially non-nuclear-weapon States, and to resolve the question of inequity and asymmetry that is of concern to various States that have agreed on the establishment of comprehensive safeguard systems with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It would also place all parties on an equal footing, without leaving some at a competitive disadvantage in the development of civilian nuclear programmes. It is critical to ensure that fissile material stocks are subject to a system of accounting and control within the broadest framework possible, since they pose a proliferation risk. Mexico therefore proposes that States should make a declaration of all the fissile materials they hold, take steps to gradually reduce their stocks and place these materials under the Agency's comprehensive safeguard systems. It is also essential that the treaty should contemplate prohibiting the direct use of fissile material for the production of nuclear weapons and outlawing the transfer of fissile material produced for civilian uses to purposes related to nuclear weapons. Moreover, the future treaty should include neptunium and americium as fissile materials, given their fissile capabilities and their potential for use as nuclear weapons.

In accordance with its obligations as a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Mexico supports promoting the use of low-enriched uranium for peaceful purposes and outlawing the acquisition and transfer of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices to non-parties to the Treaty and the provision of assistance to third countries for the production of fissile material for explosive purposes.

The parties to the Treaty agreed to commence the negotiations on action 15 of the 2010 NPT Review Conference action plan, which remains in full force and effect. We believe that the reports of the Group of Governmental Experts and the expert preparatory group are crucial contributions to making progress towards the negotiation of the instrument and that they deserve serious consideration in this Conference.

**The President:** I thank the representative of Mexico. I have no more speakers on the list. I see Pakistan. The representative of Pakistan has the floor.

**Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan):** Thank you very much, Mr. President. Since we have a few minutes left and in an attempt to make this an interactive and meaningful debate, I wanted to pose a question to the delegation of India, with your indulgence. Today we have heard many delegations refer to the issue of a moratorium, stating – and I paraphrase – that the announcement of a moratorium on the production of fissile material would show a country's good faith and support for the treaty. My delegation's views on this aspect are well known: we do not support ending our national production of fissile material at this stage and obviously we do not support a moratorium. We also heard a very clear and articulate view from China on this subject. India is one country which has reaffirmed its declaratory position in favour of an FMCT and the commencement of negotiations, but has not announced a moratorium. Would the delegation of India care to enlighten us about its

position on this particular aspect and whether it is willing to back its public call for support for an FMCT by ending the production of fissile material, as many other nuclear-weapon States have done? Is it willing to announce a voluntary moratorium?

**The President:** I thank the representative of Pakistan. I give the floor to the representative of India.

**Ms. Bhandari** (India): Thank you, Mr. President. To respond to the query posed to my delegation by the delegation of Pakistan, our position on a moratorium on the production of fissile material is clear. A moratorium would essentially be voluntary in nature, therefore it would not be irreversible and it would definitely be unverifiable. That, in our view, would not meet the necessary conditions for an FMCT which, as I underlined in my statement earlier, should be universal, non-discriminatory and internationally and effectively verifiable. We also believe that a moratorium cannot be a substitute for a legally binding treaty and that if a moratorium were to be in place, that would rob the international community of an incentive to negotiate an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament.

**The President:** I thank the representative of India. I see no further requests for the floor. I would like to ask the distinguished members of the panel if they have any views or comments after our discussion. Ambassador Zniber, you have the floor.

**Mr. Zniber** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. If I may, I would like to speak rather freely – naturally, I was going to say – about this important issue, just to share with you some ideas on these subjects that have been going around in my country for a little while now. There was a time when Morocco wanted to go down the nuclear energy route – for peaceful purposes, of course – to produce electricity, and there was talk of building a nuclear power station for that purpose. At a press conference, His Majesty the late King Hassan II was asked by journalists whether Morocco could offer any guarantees that the installation of such a facility would not lead to proliferation in the field. His Majesty replied: “But what would you have me do with a nuclear weapon?” From that moment on, I think that everyone has understood that the Kingdom of Morocco is in favour of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the cessation of the nuclear arms race – not out of virtue, but out of necessity. Something that has no use should not exist and should not be stored. We might well be glad that the cold war is behind us but, ahead of us, there is the potential for more tension and crises, and as I have modestly tried to explain – or, at least, present – to you today, we need a global approach, a purposeful approach, an approach underpinned by conviction, and I think that this message has been conveyed in practically all the statements we have heard today. We all agree on the need to move forward in this area. We have focused on the issue of fissile material and, of course, I think we need to clarify matters in that regard. However, from our point of view and given the circumstances in which we live, that is not enough. Without wishing to diminish its importance, approaching the issue from the perspective of fissile material will not in itself be sufficient to prevent a nuclear arms race. That is all I had to say, Mr President, and I thank you.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Ambassador of Morocco most sincerely for sharing his thoughts and his country’s experience on the matter in hand.

(*spoke in English*)

I now invite Ambassador Gabriëlse to take the floor.

**Mr. Gabriëlse** (Netherlands): Thank you. I do not wish to prolong the discussion, but I wanted to thank you, Mr. President, and all my colleagues, for having this discussion. I think we had a very good in-depth discussion. As others have said, we have to continue this discussion, which I think is a responsibility that we must shoulder, since we believe that FMCT is such an important subject. I fully agree with the Ambassador of China when he said we cannot afford to let the Conference run in neutral; we have to put it into forward gear. It was also enlightening to hear his experience of the negotiations of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which we can take as an example to move forward, and his quotation of paragraphs 5 and 6 of the report of the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group, which will be good to keep in mind for our future work.

As the representative of the Republic of Korea said, all the groundwork is in place, so we have little excuse for not going further. I hope that all of us will shoulder our responsibility on this subject and that we can take it forward as soon as possible. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for making this possible.

**The President:** Thank you very much, Ambassador Gabriëlse, for your views. Once again, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to extend sincere thanks to all our distinguished panellists and also to the member States for your very thoughtful, insightful and inspiring contributions to this discussion.

Before adjourning this meeting, I would like to inform you that, based on the very productive and enriching informal consultations we have had this week, and also in response to the suggestions of many members, I believe that together with the discussion of our draft decision, it would be helpful for the Conference to devote some time during our presidency to discussion in greater detail of the working paper recently put forward by the delegation of the Netherlands.

Therefore, I would like to propose to the Conference that we organize an extra plenary meeting on Tuesday, 13 August 2019, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., to share our views, comments and opinions on this paper. If there is no objection to this proposal, I will ask the secretariat to make the necessary arrangements.

I see no flag raised. So, the next plenary meeting will take place on the afternoon of Tuesday, 13 August 2019, to discuss the working paper of the Netherlands. We are exploring the possibility of holding it in the format of panel discussion. Further information on the format and modalities of the meeting will be provided to the delegations in due course.

The meeting is adjourned.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*