
Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and fifty-sixth plenary meeting

Held via videoconference on Wednesday, 10 February 2021, at 10 a.m. Central European Time

President: Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve (Belgium)



The President: I call to order the 1556th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Dear colleagues, before proceeding to our business for today, I would like to warmly welcome two new colleagues who are with us this morning, Her Excellency Ms. Alicia Victoria Arango Olmos of Colombia and Her Excellency Ms. Lucy Duncan of New Zealand. Again, welcome to the Conference on my behalf and on behalf of the whole Conference – we look forward to working with you.

Now, let me move now to the proposal made by the group of the six Presidents of the 2021 session. As you know, on Friday, 5 February, the six Presidents circulated a revised proposal for your consideration. This revised proposal contains three documents – namely, documents under the symbols CD/WP.633 and CD/WP.634 and a draft presidential statement.

I would like to thank all delegations for the useful comments, their insightful suggestions and the support they expressed to the group of the six Presidents. We are aware that in the spirit of compromise, several delegations have shown great flexibility, and we are grateful for that. The group of the six Presidents has done its best to strike a very fine balance between all the comments received. Overall, you will see that we have strengthened the language on the negotiating mandate in operative paragraph 3 of document CD/WP.633 and done our best to strike a greater balance in the timetable on the work of the subsidiary bodies. These changes are now reflected in documents CD/WP.633 and CD/WP.634.

Before I open the floor to delegations, I would like to call again for maximum flexibility from all in a spirit of compromise. We are close to something that could be a great accomplishment not only for the Conference but also for each of us individually. I am asking everyone to visualize the positive outcome of the extensive work we have carried out together these last weeks. I believe this positive outcome is now within reach.

Dear colleagues, I now open the floor for comments by delegations. Those who would like to take the floor can do so by clicking on the green “raise hand” icon. And the first speaker I have on my list is the Ambassador of Colombia. Ambassador, you have the floor and, again, welcome to the Conference on Disarmament.

Ms. Arango Olmos (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, thank you for your words of welcome. I hope to be a very special participant in the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, on my return to Geneva as Ambassador of Colombia, I am concerned to see that this forum’s problems appear to have remained insurmountable and that substantive work seems far away, despite all the efforts of those who are committed to fulfilling the Conference’s mandate.

During the current session, we have been relying on a model of collaborative work among the six presidencies of the year. We have received joint proposals, and the group of the year’s six Presidents has made truly great bilateral and regional efforts; even so, consensus has yet to emerge.

My delegation appreciates this effort by the group of the six Presidents and is committed to supporting your proposal. To this end, we will exercise the utmost flexibility, as you have just requested in your opening remarks.

We believe that although the proposal is imperfect, as you have said on several occasions, there is great merit in the fact that the delegations have an opportunity to agree on a programme of work.

In order to carry out the mandate to negotiate multilateral disarmament instruments, it is essential to know the positions and interests of the other States members of the Conference. A constructive dialogue does not force us to compromise on our national positions or on a particular outcome, but it does allow us to move closer to this goal.

My delegation believes that the efforts made by the group of the year’s Presidents and their teams are a sign of their commitment to the Conference on Disarmament. However, when there seems to be no consensus on wording proposed precisely to facilitate consensus, the problem is possibly one of political will, not, it would seem, of action.

Your proposal is on the table, and delegations have two options: the first is to demonstrate their commitment to this Conference and to the international disarmament

architecture in general so that together, without prejudging any process or its outcome, we can resume the substantive work that unites us; the second is to continue discussions on language that do not contribute to international peace and security, but do give time to those who, for whatever reason, do not want to commit to any multilateral solution to the issues on our agenda, preferring instead to maintain a stalemate in a negotiating forum in which no negotiations have taken place for too many years.

Mr. President, colleagues, the position of Colombia on disarmament affairs has been consistent over time, but I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate it briefly. Colombia is in favour of general and complete disarmament, the establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons and nuclear non-proliferation initiatives. We also support the negotiation and entry into force of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Regarding the use of outer space, for Colombia, this must be kept safe, secure, stable and sustainable. We support the introduction of confidence-building measures and the development of standards of responsible behaviour for outer space activities and unilateral commitments not to become the first country to place weapons in outer space.

Negative security assurances are one of the international goals of disarmament and non-proliferation, especially since any nuclear attack on a State that does not have a similar response capacity is strategically and morally unacceptable.

Turning to procedural issues, my delegation believes that it is important to expand the membership of the Conference to ensure that more States Members of the United Nations are represented.

Although Colombia supports decision-making by consensus, it maintains that the procedure must not be abused. No country should use the consensus mechanism to veto decisions.

In conclusion, Mr. President, allow me to reiterate my willingness and that of my entire team to continue working with you and the other five members of the group of the year's Presidents. We hope that, through concrete action, all delegations will demonstrate their commitment to the Conference on Disarmament and to international peace and security by supporting your proposed programme of work and seeking to restart substantive discussions in this forum. Thank you very much.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Colombia for her statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of New Zealand. Also, again, welcome to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador.

Ms. Duncan (New Zealand): Thank you very much, Mr. President. As this is the first time I take the floor as New Zealand's new disarmament Ambassador, effective from 1 February, let me greet all Conference on Disarmament members and observers and members of the secretariat in the language of New Zealand's indigenous people, Māori: tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Mr. President, thank you very much for your warm words of welcome. It is a special pleasure to greet and welcome my colleague from Colombia, Ambassador Alicia Arango, not least because Colombia was my most recent posting, up until May 2020.

Mr. President, I do have instructions on the six Presidents' proposal of various decisions relating to the Conference's work in 2021. New Zealand can join consensus on this set of decisions, and we very much hope that consensus will be our collective decision today.

I do not have my first formal speech to the Conference on Disarmament – that will come – but I do have some personal reflections to share. I was here in the Conference on Disarmament in the 1990s as New Zealand's Deputy Permanent Representative. I had the privilege to represent my country and one of our most important foreign policy goals at that time: the end to nuclear testing in the Pacific and globally. I had a role in the fraught but inevitably successful expansion of the Conference on Disarmament's membership by 23 countries in this period.

So, Mr. President, I bring back to this Conference, more than twenty years later, my commitment, optimism and New Zealand's interests and values. New Zealand will continue to work with each member and observer with respect and friendship, seeking a common purpose for the benefit of our peoples and planet, their peace and prosperity. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of New Zealand for her statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Belarus on behalf of the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

Mr. Ambrazevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, today I have the honour of delivering a statement in the name of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in support of the Conference on Disarmament:

The CSTO member States reiterate their commitment to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. As an integral part of the United Nations disarmament machinery, the Conference has made a significant practical contribution to strengthening international peace and security.

Throughout its existence, the Geneva negotiating forum has produced a number of fundamental arms control and disarmament agreements: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

As multilateral disarmament and arms control instruments and mechanisms continue to be dismantled, exacerbated by a crisis of confidence and growing confrontation between countries, we believe that the Conference remains a key platform for negotiations on a wide range of topical issues involving international security, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and arms control.

The CSTO member States emphasize the urgent need to intensify negotiation work at the Conference on Disarmament on nuclear disarmament issues, including negative security assurances, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, assessments of the impact of technological progress on the prospect of creating new types of weapons of mass destruction that have characteristics comparable in destructive effect to existing such weapons and the avoidance of risks associated with the malicious use of new technologies.

In 2020, the Conference again failed to adopt a programme of work and to take on meaningful activities within its mandate. We advocate launching such activities at the Conference on Disarmament as quickly as possible with the framework of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work based on the Conference's agenda, in accordance with the negotiating mandate of the forum, while respecting the fundamental principles of its functioning and rules of procedure, especially the consensus rule. In this regard, we support the efforts of the six Presidents of the Conference to enable this negotiating body to resume work.

We call on all Conference members to make every effort to overcome existing differences and prevent new dividing lines from emerging, to observe the fundamental principles and rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament, to avoid politicizing the Conference, including the institution of the presidency at the Conference on Disarmament, and to seek the adoption of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work in accordance with the Conference agenda, based on the principle that equal attention should be paid to all topical issues in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, rather than dividing matters into "key" and other issues.

We consider the initiative to draft an international instrument for the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism to be a viable means of breaking the stalemate in the work of the Conference.

The CSTO member States reaffirm their support for the Conference on Disarmament and their readiness to make constructive efforts to achieve progress in its work.

I also request the secretariat to issue this statement as an official document of the Conference. The relevant note will shortly be submitted to the secretariat.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador of Belarus, on behalf of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Canada.

Ms. Norton (Canada): Thank you, Mr. President, and welcome to our new Colombian and New Zealand colleagues.

It has been a demanding journey for the group of the six Presidents to get to the point of this second revision of the proposal presented by Belgium. Our work began from the premise that it was best to build on the proposal put forward by the group of the six Presidents of the 2020 session under Algeria's 2020 presidency, a view regularly endorsed during Belgium's consultations in the fall. It is worth noting, however, that no delegation urged a complete copy and paste of the 2020 text, which is why our text is and remains a distinct proposal.

Indeed, 2021 is not 2020, and this was made clear over the discussion during the previous weeks. Suggestions to amend the proposal have been made by various delegations, and the proposal has evolved accordingly. Naturally, it has been difficult to include in the text all suggestions and to find the right balance where suggestions from one delegation were incompatible with those of another.

This second revision offers a compromise that is imperfect but serviceable if delegations will show flexibility. There are elements Canada preferred in the original proposal which have disappeared, and changes made to get to the current version which we do not feel were necessary. Nonetheless, in the interest of seeing the Conference on Disarmament return to a path that could lead to actual negotiation of agreements, the revised proposal is fit for purpose, and we hope all delegations will concur.

As Canada has long been an uber-advocate, or seen as an uber-advocate, of negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference – a perception we believe to be incorrect; we are just one of many – I would like to say a few words about the change in this second revision concerning subsidiary body 2.

We see in this amendment no diminishment of the salience of such a treaty as a step towards nuclear disarmament. Instead, we believe the door has been left open to as wide a consideration of the issue as possible through a complete compromise on the language concerning subsidiary body 2's general focus.

The fact is that the First Committee and the Non-Proliferation Treaty review conferences have repeatedly endorsed immediate negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, that considerable groundwork has been done through a group of governmental experts and high-level preparatory group to set the stage for such negotiations and that the majority of Conference on Disarmament members still call for such a treaty. Our belief is that a general focus on fissile materials within the subsidiary body 2 will illuminate all sides of this issue, including that there is a diversity of views on whether negotiation of a cut-off treaty or a treaty with an enhanced scope is the most practical way forward.

We embrace such a discussion and we look forward to it. Thank you, Mr. President, and an acknowledgement to you and your team for getting us to where we are today in the Conference with this proposal before us.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Canada. I now give the floor to the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would first like to welcome the decision of Cuba to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This step is confirmation of the consistent arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament policy of the Republic of Cuba, a responsible State that concerns itself with the future of international peace and security not just in word but also in deed. It is difficult to overestimate

the significance of the Treaty. We all know very well that it is one of the most important components of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The expeditious entry into force of the Treaty is our shared goal, and we consider the decision of the Cuban leadership a positive step in that direction. We count on the States on which the future of the Treaty depends to take steps to ensure that it enters into force as quickly as possible.

I would also like to align myself with the statement of Belarus, which was read out by Ambassador Ambrazevich. I would like to add that the Conference on Disarmament remains an important component of the United Nations disarmament machinery. It is playing a larger role under the current circumstances, as it is now essentially the only forum left where States may continue constructive dialogue on matters directly related to upholding and reinforcing international security. We believe that substantive discussions at the Conference should serve to maximize the use of our forum's potential and above all to help start the negotiating process.

To that end, I would like to say a few words about the revised proposal from the six Presidents of this session. We see this revised proposal as moving in the right direction, and for that reason we appreciate the efforts of the Belgian presidency to seek a compromise and take into account suggestions from the delegations. However, we think that work should continue, as, in the view of our delegation, even the revised proposal is still far from reflecting our understanding that the programme of work is the fundamental document for organization of the consideration of substantive issues in the Conference – that is, of course, primarily for the consideration of the agenda items.

At the last meeting, our delegation expressed its views on how to improve the documents. A number of them were considered favourably and are reflected in the revised version. However, we believe that efforts to find a compromise should continue, so that the documents are better balanced and as close as possible to a common vision for a programme of work for the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. I would like to thank you and the other members of the group of the Presidents of the annual session for your untiring efforts to put together a programme of work on which consensus can be reached.

I agree that the three documents before us are not perfect. Of course, they would look different if they included everything we wished for – we are to some extent unhappy and we regret that some wording that we would have liked included in the documents has disappeared. However, all in all and under the circumstances, we are supportive of your proposal and can join consensus on the documents in front of us.

We hope that the Conference on Disarmament, with the adoption of these documents, will again be able to work properly on its core functions, as it has before. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Germany. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Argentina.

Mr. Villegas (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, first of all, my delegation would like to welcome the new representatives, the Ambassadors of Colombia and New Zealand. On a personal note, I cannot help but mention that I had the privilege of being a United Nations disarmament fellow in 1994 and of being here at the Conference on Disarmament and personally meeting Lucy Duncan, now Ambassador Duncan, when she was Deputy Permanent Representative. So, 26 years later, it is a great pleasure for me, as a diplomat and a disarmament official, to meet her again.

My delegation welcomes the ratification by Cuba of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on 4 February and hopes that this new ratification will encourage those countries that have not yet done so, especially those listed in annex 2 to the Treaty, to sign and ratify this key instrument for international security.

Mr. President, my delegation would once again like to express its support for the draft package you have submitted on behalf of the group of the annual session's six Presidents.

We believe that this second revised version brings us even closer to the desired consensus, since it addresses several of the concerns expressed by the members of this Conference during our last meeting. In particular, we note that the latest version includes a preambular paragraph noting that the Conference on Disarmament is a platform for member States to conduct negotiations on the basis of consensus. We also welcome the amendment to operative paragraph 3, which clarifies that one of the objectives of the subsidiary bodies is to consider legally binding instruments for negotiation. Likewise, we deem it a positive step that new operative paragraph 7 mentions the need for the Conference to adopt the reports prepared by the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies, following the model applied in 2018.

We also believe that the clarification at the end of the draft presidential statement on the effective functioning of the Conference, which indicates that the facilitator's report will be presented to the Conference in a formal meeting, contributes to consensus. We feel that this new measure promotes confidence and transparency in our exchanges in this forum.

My delegation is grateful to the presidency for its hard work during this long period of consultations and appreciates the efforts to produce a document on which all parties can agree. The document clearly reflects the delicate balance that the presidency is compelled to maintain in order to satisfy the requirements of all the parties. Since this Conference is a forum governed by the consensus rule, as indicated in the revised version of your draft, all members of this Conference know that flexibility is the only way out of the stalemate in the Conference.

As we look ahead to upcoming meetings this year, such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, my delegation would like to invite the other delegations to show the flexibility that we were once able to demonstrate in the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that the resumption of substantive discussions in the Conference will be an extremely positive and encouraging sign in view of the negotiations that await us in August. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Argentina. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. Hashmi (Pakistan): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you for convening this meeting and for your continuing efforts along with the members of the group of the session's six Presidents. I want to also join other delegations in welcoming the new Ambassadors of Colombia and New Zealand. We also appreciate this opportunity to share views on the latest version of the draft proposal.

I want to begin by contextualizing the work we are undertaking and the larger environment in which we are obliged to operate. Let us be clear about the bigger picture – that is, the realities of the global and regional strategic environment and how this milieu has a mutually reinforcing impact on the arms control agenda and machinery.

My delegation has certainly drawn attention to this environment and realities and how they govern the Conference on Disarmament's work and direction. The documents we are considering today in many ways reflect this state of affairs.

Mr. President, we have made and heard calls for balance and equal treatment. It may well be that some, including my delegation, believe that these documents do not fully meet these two thresholds. Yet, on our part, we have demonstrated maximum flexibility and hope others do the same.

It may be a routine mantra to assert that an obsession with a single-issue arbitrary priority by some has prevented the Conference on Disarmament from delivering, but that mantra expresses a reality. It is also a reality that there is no agreement on any of the priorities advocated by delegations. Therefore, a comprehensive and balanced approach that is anchored in realism and takes full account of the larger global and regional context is essential.

We know that this is by no means an easy task for any President, yet it remains essential. We recognize your hard work. We value your outreach and appreciate the sincere efforts that you and your team have made. We view your current proposal as a step in the right direction that takes into account these realities. As for balance, we believe your proposal

is headed in the right direction, even though it falls short of what we have clearly and consistently underscored.

For the record, let me reiterate: preferential treatment of one particular item must be done away with in its entirety. I want to make one point very clear, and this is the point which we have consistently made during our bilateral consultations and during our statements in the Conference. And this point is that the previous formulation in the timetable on subsidiary body 2 was not acceptable. Any tinkering with or additions to the proposals that we have in front of us today for subsidiary body 2 would take us backwards and would detract from the common goal that we wish to achieve.

Mr. President, under your guidance we may have reached the point that enables the Conference to resume substantive discussions on all its agenda items. We support your efforts and we hope to adopt these documents.

It is vital for the Conference not to regress but to move forward. The Conference must move towards greater balance in the treatment of all agenda items, timetables and, indeed, the work of the Conference as a whole. This would be imperative to enable the Conference to address the real issues which merit our attention and not get entrapped in the shackles of its own legacy again. At the same time, addressing the legitimate concerns of all delegations should remain paramount. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Indonesia.

Ms. Werdaningtyas (Indonesia): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Let me begin by joining others in welcoming the new Ambassadors of New Zealand and Colombia.

I will be very brief, as we already presented our position during the last plenary meeting. Let me join others in expressing our appreciation to you and the other members of the group of the year's six Presidents for your work and commitment in advancing our work. We also appreciate your continued efforts to pursue consultations with delegates, taking their views and input into careful consideration, which resulted in the latest revised draft proposal circulated on Friday, 5 February.

The delegation of Indonesia, like many other delegations, also finds that the draft proposal is not yet ideal. However, we find it an adequate basis for the start of substantive work by the Conference on Disarmament.

We again reiterate our hope that through this draft proposal, the group of the year's six Presidents can assure us all that the substantive work of the Conference on all four core issues will be pursued equally to achieve progress that is parallel and concrete.

And to this end, Mr. President, Indonesia will continue to engage constructively with the work of the Conference and will not stand in the way of a consensus. To conclude, we would like to call on delegations to exercise the utmost flexibility and constructive engagement in order to allow this Conference to achieve its long-delayed objective. I thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Indonesia. I now give the floor to the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ali (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. As colleagues know, the bilateral consultations conducted by the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament were not comprehensive; nor were open informal consultations organized in accordance with established practice to give delegations the opportunity to express their positions and discuss various proposals. What we have seen so far is the continued issuance and revision of documents without adequate discussion. We believe that this approach does not provide a sound basis for ensuring the support of all member States.

Our delegation has studied the second revised draft that the secretariat distributed last Friday, and I would like to quickly make the following observations. Since the beginning of the current session, my delegation has repeatedly made it clear that it does not agree with the approach based on the presentation and adoption of documents proposed by the presidency as part of the package. We also do not agree that the adoption of proposals related to

substantive work that would enable the Conference to start discussing the items on its agenda should be linked to the adoption of the proposal on procedural issues and that this should be a condition for agreement on the programme of work.

To the best of our knowledge, the concept of a package was not part of previous practice at any stage. The adoption of documents must be based on the added value of each document and consensus on them, not on artificial considerations.

Secondly, the priority must be the adoption of the programme of work and the adoption of decisions that are supported by all. In our view, the focus at the current stage should be on decisions related to the substantive work of the Conference, without imposing conditions and constraints on them. We believe that we should be able to reach a consensus on the draft decision on the establishment of subsidiary bodies, provided that some concerns about the title and about the third and eighth operative paragraphs, which have been deleted in part or in whole, are addressed. The same applies to the second draft decision on the timetable for the work of the subsidiary bodies, once an agreement has been reached on the title and the designation of the subsidiary bodies. We stand ready to contribute to any consultations on these matters.

Thirdly, my delegation believes that further consultations are needed on the extent to which it is necessary to address the topic of working methods and on the methods for doing so, and what the results could be. The draft presidential statement in its current form is unacceptable to my delegation. It is clear that the decision on any proposed document must be preceded by serious discussions. These consultations could continue under the next presidency. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and now give the floor to South Africa.

Mr. September (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President. Let me start by welcoming our new colleagues. As we say goodbye to the year of the rat, while welcoming the year of the ox, allow me to start by wishing all of my colleagues who celebrate the start of the new year now a happy new year. Let me also thank you for giving me the floor. And on behalf of my delegation, I would like to express our appreciation for the manner in which you have carried out consultations on the draft decision.

By building on the Algerian proposal of 2020, you have demonstrated not only a progressive approach but also your willingness to listen to the various views expressed. South Africa welcomes the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by Cuba and calls for the universalization of the Treaty. We hope that all States, in particular annex 2 States, will ratify the Treaty so that it can enter into force.

I would also like to reiterate South Africa's view that the continued impasse in the Conference on Disarmament is not sustainable and will increasingly affect the relevance and stature of and international confidence in the Conference as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. We all have to play our part to restore confidence in the Conference and we all have to ensure that we strike a delicate balance to enable the Conference to resume its substantive work, but, at the same time, to ensure that we do not dilute the negotiating mandate of the Conference.

Regarding the proposals that were circulated by the secretariat, as indicated previously by South Africa, South Africa remains flexible. And in the spirit of compromise that you have called for, Mr. President, South Africa, to open the door, can live with what is currently on the table. Though not ideal, South Africa will not stand in the way of consensus.

Please allow me to refer to my statement last week and specifically the question related to whether some of the meetings of the subsidiary bodies will be held in a formal setting. We hope that some of the sessions will be held in an open and formal setting.

In closing, Mr. President, let me thank you and your team, as well as the group of the year's six Presidents, and assure you that the South African delegation remains, as in the past, flexible and that you have our delegation's continued cooperation and support. I thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa and now give the floor to Cuba.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would like to begin by welcoming the new Ambassadors of Colombia and New Zealand. Before turning to the programme of work, I would like to thank my colleagues for their expressions of support and congratulations today and at the time of the signature and ratification by Cuba of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

As you know, for the Republic of Cuba, complete nuclear disarmament is and must be the highest priority in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, and turning now to the programme of work, we find it regrettable that the fulfilment of the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament and the pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons are not addressed in stronger and more direct terms.

We find it regrettable that a clear negotiating mandate cannot be given to the subsidiary bodies, including subsidiary body 2. Moreover, as you all know, Cuba does not consider it a priority to deal with secondary and procedural matters, as this distracts us from our substantive and fundamental work, nor do we believe that the solution lies in creating subsidiary bodies to discuss matters, as this also distances us from the fulfilment of our mandate.

Having said this, I would like to state that, in a display of great flexibility, our delegation could move forward with the new text you have proposed if it manages to strike a delicate balance and garner the support of all the delegations. On a personal note, I wish to highlight your sincere, transparent and meaningful efforts. We appreciate the way in which you have accommodated some of our concerns regarding the previous text; the outstanding issues are, as you know, subject to the political will of States, and I am convinced that this does not diminish in the least the merits of your presidency and your joint work with the group of the annual session's six Presidents.

In conclusion, we reiterate that you have the full support of our delegation. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba. I now give the floor to Sweden.

Ms. Lindegren (Sweden): As this is the first time I am taking the floor, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and for the work of your delegation and that of the group of the six Presidents of the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament and the secretariat. Let me also welcome all the newcomers, including the Ambassadors of Colombia and New Zealand.

Sweden welcomes the hard efforts that you are making in order for the Conference to have substantial discussions and the consultations that you have undertaken in this regard. Disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, is a priority for my Government. Sweden, like many other States, is willing to show flexibility in order to make this happen.

It is true that we would have liked to see a clearer reference to a fissile material cut-off treaty, but it is also our duty to support a compromise that can break the stalemate in this body. We need to show to the rest of the world that the Conference can deliver on its mandate.

Today, my Minister, Ms. Ann Christin Linde, will record her statement for the high-level week. Our hope is that, in her statement, she will be able to welcome the ability of this body to resume substantial work, not that she will yet again have to regret the lack of progress. I thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of Sweden. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, thank you for giving me the floor. I would like to join other delegations that have welcomed your efforts and expressed their appreciation for your extensive efforts in consulting the delegations, but before I make my comments on the draft programme of work or the draft decisions, as you have worded them, I would like to welcome Ambassador Alicia Arango Olmos of Colombia and Ambassador Lucy Duncan of New Zealand. In fact, when I heard that Ambassador Duncan and the Ambassador of Argentina have been in this business for so long, I felt like a child in disarmament.

However, I will try to express my country's positions. And first of all, Mr. President, I should also thank you for the revised proposals that you have tabled. I just wanted to make one correction in line with the rules of procedure. We have been hearing references to the group of the annual session's six Presidents (the so-called P6). I do take it that this is your proposal, Mr. President, when it comes to formal adoption, because there is no reference to a group of six Presidents in the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament. We should stick to those rules, and you should call it the proposal by the President if we wish to be faithful to the rules of procedure of the Conference.

Coming to the latest proposal, I must say that my delegation was surprised to see this proposal by you. And we are still examining it both here and in the capital. Now, one of the elements of surprise that we came across was that we were satisfied with the previous draft decision, although we had proposed some minor changes. We also heard a number of other delegations propose some amendments from the floor. However, the revision that we have now has language that was not actually proposed from the floor in the form that can be seen now. I do understand that this is your proposal based on suggestions and proposals made by some delegations in bilateral meetings or perhaps conveyed to you in writing, and in this context my delegation has also conveyed a proposal to you now and hopes that it, too, can be taken on board.

Mr. President, my delegation does not understand the description of subsidiary body 2 as worded in the current text. What is meant by the words "general focus on fissile materials"? Do they mean that we cover all uranium in the world, including uranium mines, because the same uranium is also used for peaceful uses of atomic energy. The way it is worded now, Mr. President, the issue falls within the scope of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in Vienna, not that of the Conference on Disarmament, as we are no longer talking about production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We therefore need further discussion of this subject and the other decisions, as also suggested by the delegation of the Russian Federation.

We also take note of the fact that there have been no open-ended or informal discussions here under your presidency where we could have ironed out our differences. We will suggest that you convene an informal meeting of the Conference to discuss these issues further, as also provided for in the Conference's rules of procedure.

I have also heard objections to and support for the Shannon mandate, contained in document CD/1299. When I heard the Ambassador of Canada, I was taken back to my participation in the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty and the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group, both convened under Canadian Chairs.

And both groups adopted a recommendation that the mandate contained in document CD/1299 remain the most appropriate basis for negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty. I was a little surprised when I heard the diversity of views, because at least these two groups had not come out with any recommendation other than to endorse document CD/1299.

Mr. President, I also have a procedural question for you. What we see on the table are two draft decisions and one presidential statement. However, the first paragraph of the draft presidential statement refers to a decision by the Conference. I fail to understand why it is not called a draft decision, because the Conference must first take a decision to appoint Mr. Félix Baumann, Ambassador of Switzerland, as facilitator of consultations to determine whether there is common ground for addressing issues relating to the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. Only then can you make a presidential statement.

I believe, then, that we have a long way to go before these decisions are in the appropriate form. My delegation would be more than happy to engage constructively in the discussions which would be convened under your presidency.

And we share the same goal as the international community and other Conference members, including observer States – namely, to break the stalemate and make concrete progress in this body. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of India. Are there any other speakers?

(spoke in French)

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) *(spoke in French)*: Mr. President. Good morning, everyone. Good morning, colleagues.

I would like to begin by welcoming the Ambassadors of New Zealand and Colombia, wishing them every success and saying that my delegation is at their disposal to initiate productive cooperation with their two countries in the Conference on Disarmament and elsewhere, of course.

Next, Mr. President, I would like to thank you warmly for all the efforts you have made to reach consensus and for having listened to the concerns and expectations expressed by all the member States of the Conference, and, through you, I would like to thank all your colleagues in the group of the annual session's six Presidents for their efforts.

I had not intended to take the floor, but given that the debate is moving in a certain direction and that, as I understand it, some of the delegations that have taken the floor have asked for consultations to continue on the draft decisions that you are proposing, I would like to say, first of all, that it was not my delegation's wish for consultations to continue, since we were prepared to demonstrate all the flexibility needed for work to begin in our forum. If that is how it is going to be, if the consultations are to continue, I think that it will be useful for us to look at the issue of subsidiary body 2 and continue to see if it is possible to improve the body's mandate. I must say that I have some sympathy with what was expressed by my Indian colleague before me, so I will not dwell on this for too long or indeed at all.

A speaker before me talked about a mantra. I believe that there are also negative mantras in the Conference on Disarmament. There are mantras, but there are also negative mantras, and that is the problem, from our point of view; that is what needs to be addressed. In any case, this is what I wanted to tell you. I would like to say that we are at your disposal and that we wish you every success.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I thank the Ambassador of France.

(spoke in English)

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): Thank you very much for giving me the floor. First of all, I would like to extend my heartfelt welcome to our new colleagues, the Ambassadors of Colombia and New Zealand. I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to the President for his tireless efforts to take into consideration the opinions and concerns expressed both formally and informally.

The new proposal on the table is a well-balanced one that will also enable us to engage in a meaningful way in substantive work, so, even though we are a bit uncomfortable with the deletion of the reference to a ban on the production of fissile materials in the description of the mandate of subsidiary body 2, we will be flexible for the sake of consensus-building. We would thus like to support the new draft package proposal which is now on the table. I would also like to express our appreciation for the coordination by the group of the six Presidents of the annual session, as it facilitates consensus-building. And I would like to call upon all members to show flexibility, as well as political will, so that this body can start its substantive work as soon as possible.

With that, I would like to reiterate our full support for the new proposal made by the Belgian President. Thank you very much.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Japan. I now give the floor to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. I would also like to welcome the Ambassadors of Colombia and New Zealand and wish them success.

Mr. President, thank you for providing a revised version of the draft decision on a programme of work which is contained in documents CD/WP.633 and CD/WP.634. The Conference on Disarmament has been facing a very consequential deadlock for more than

two decades because of the absence of political will, particularly on the part of nuclear-weapon States, to focus and work on the Conference's core mandate.

It is regrettable that we are repeating ourselves year after year without moving an inch forward to agree on a programme of work which will enable the Conference to start its substantial work and consider elements of legally binding instruments. The Conference cannot move forward without a balanced and comprehensive programme of work on core issues. Unfortunately, the Conference has been forced into distraction by certain States that table unnecessary and divisive notions that have nothing to do with the Conference's substantive work or its programme of work.

We believe that the proposed decisions regarding the establishment of subsidiary bodies and the proposed decisions on the mandates, coordinators and timetables for the work of the subsidiary bodies should be considered, without any connection with the so-called presidential statement, as a package. We already actually made our objections in this regard very clearly during the plenary meeting and in bilateral consultations with you, Mr. President.

My delegation has said in previous plenary meetings that the draft programme of work and the decisions to implement it could be a good basis for work, although some amendments would of course be required. We have made some proposals and comments in order to improve the text of the programme of work in line with the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In the meetings and in bilateral consultation with you, Mr. President, we have proposed clear amendments and made comments in this regard. We have noticed that there have been some modifications to the text and we welcome the changes and improvements to operative paragraph 7 of document CD/WP.633.

Although we regret that our proposals have not been reflected in the new versions in full and we are not satisfied with the new drafts and we regret that the new versions lack a clear statement of the Conference's core mandate, we are ready, in the interest of facilitating substantive work by this body, to show flexibility and join consensus on the two decisions. However, it should be emphasized that these decisions apply only to the 2021 session and do not set a precedent for future sessions. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you Mr. President. I first want to take the floor to make a right of reply to a statement that was made at the last meeting of the Conference on Disarmament by the representative of Iran and then I will respond to the programme of work.

Mr. President, once again, Iran's claims that the United States is in violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty are simply ridiculous. The United States has always negotiated in good faith per its article VI obligations. Since the Treaty entered into force, the United States has reduced its strategic nuclear stockpile by 88 per cent – again, 88 per cent. That is a very clear example of good faith. Would we call Iran's years of lies, cover-ups, denials of access to International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors, hidden nuclear facilities, rhetorical denials and acquisition of clandestine nuclear material and equipment good faith? I do not think so.

We all know the background of that country's nuclear programme. I am not sure anyone could, with a straight face, call Iran's actions compliance with the Treaty, let alone make the facetious claim of "over-compliance". And, Mr. President, if the reports are correct that Iran's Intelligence Minister recently warned that Iran would seek nuclear arms if "cornered", then the entire international community should be very, very concerned.

Regarding the package, Mr. President, although it is not stated clearly, or not clearly enough for the United States delegation, that the proposal is for a discussion mandate, the United States interpretation of the draft decision is that it contains a discussion mandate, not a negotiating mandate. I wanted to make that interpretation very clear.

Mr. President, my Government, as you know, has emphasized many times in this body the necessity of getting the Conference back to work. While we believe strongly that a

discussion of the Conference's working methods should be a critical element of any programme of work, the United States is prepared, in the interest of putting the Conference back on a path to dealing with the important issues facing the disarmament community, to drop its demand that the adoption of a programme of work be linked to the appointment of a working methods facilitator.

However, let me be clear. The United States will look for other ways to ensure that this body engages in an examination, a thorough examination, of how it conducts its business, an examination that is without a doubt long overdue. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America. I do not think we have more speakers. Let us wait a minute.

Dear colleagues, thank you very much for all the comments, especially the kind words for the Chair – but more importantly for the expressions of flexibility and support that I have heard from many delegations, the overwhelming majority of delegations, saying that although they are not totally happy with the proposal, they could go along with it and that they will not block consensus. I thank them very much for that.

I would also like to thank, especially, the Ambassador of the United States for the flexibility he just expressed on the linkage. This means that we do not have a package anymore, that we are considering the decisions separately from the working methods. In my view, we are now very close to consensus on a programme of work and on the establishment of subsidiary bodies.

I have heard two or maybe three delegations calling for more work or consultations, but you know the saying, “the perfect is the enemy of the good”. I want to say to those delegations that I am very much aware of their positions; we have been in touch quite frequently in recent days. And, as President, I have been in contact with many delegations in recent days alone. To the best of my knowledge, we went as far as we could. I sincerely think that any attempt to further improve the proposal would just mean that the prospect of adopting it is going to disappear. I would thus like to make an extra call for flexibility to those very few delegations and ask them to go along with the consensus and, finally, break this stalemate that we have been locked in for too long.

With that, we will now move to adoption. You have received document CD/WP.633, on a draft decision for a programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament for 2021, which is tabled by the President. You also have received document CD/WP.634, on a draft decision for the implementation of the programme of work. Given the fact that these two decisions are closely related – because the second one is the implementation of the first one – I propose that we take them together.

I see there are requests for the floor before we go to adoption. The Russian Federation has the floor.

Ms. Kuznetsova (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Unfortunately, I have to say that we have expressed our position on these documents and continue to believe that additional consultations are needed.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation. I now give the floor to the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ali (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to echo what was said by my colleague from the Russian Federation that further consultations are needed on the two draft decisions on the establishment of subsidiary bodies.

The President: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, thank you very much for giving me the floor. And like the two delegations that took the floor before me, I would like to seek more time and more consultations, as my delegation had requested you to convene an informal meeting of the Conference on Disarmament to iron out differences, to allow us to join consensus. We would very much want to join consensus, but only when the draft is acceptable to us – in the way we have proposed.

We will still remain flexible. We have not said that we are not going to demonstrate flexibility, but we do need more consultations, Mr. President, and I believe it is premature to call for adoption when you have heard at least three delegations which are not ready for adoption at this time and are only requesting more time for consultations. And it is every delegation's right to ask for more time. I believe you will accede to our request, which has been made most humbly from this floor. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of India. I now give the floor to Cuba.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to add my voice to those of the delegations that have taken the floor before me on this matter. I would like to ask you to give serious consideration to the matter, because I think that it would not be at all helpful, from a procedural point of view, to attempt to ram a decision through and for it to have a negative outcome. I think that this would undermine everything that we have been able to achieve under your presidency.

In addition, although you mentioned in your proposals the possibility of adoption, it is common practice in the Conference on Disarmament to give delegations time to consult their capitals on any possible action. Particularly if, right now, we take into account even the last statement made by the Ambassador of the United States, in which he called for changes to the very idea of the package, I think that this is something that would help us to reflect a little more on all these issues and would also respond to what a delegation said at one point about the importance of eventually holding informal meetings.

Right now, it is not entirely clear to me what we would be deciding. I think, going by your words, that the intention would be to make two decisions, which would exclude the presidential statement. I do not understand exactly how we are going to proceed, but leaving aside my understanding, and depending on the clarifications that you may give me, I think that the most important thing would be to use good judgment so that our capitals can understand exactly what is going to happen.

Our delegation would even be happy to consider these matters again tomorrow, on Friday, or on whichever day you decide, but we believe that two things would help a great deal, and these form the basis of a humble recommendation that we would like to make to you: one would be, at some point, to have a meeting exactly like this one, but of an informal nature, so that we can hear clearly about everything that we are doing and interact directly, not just through statements; another is that it would be very prudent to set aside time for – and plan – exactly what we are going to do and what we are going to adopt in each of the meetings.

These are our humble comments on the matter, and, naturally, we remain in your hands and willing, as always, to support your work. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President. I apologize for taking the floor again, but I just like to say that my delegation supports your effort to take action at this time on the two decisions that I believe you are combining into one.

Some of the delegates who have recently taken the floor clearly just want to try to get this body tied up in procedural knots and clearly do not want to see any movement in this body, so I would again, Mr. President, support your decision to take action on this document. There have been plenty of negotiations on the substance of the draft decision. Certainly, it is not a perfect document, but you never get a perfect document out of these types of discussions and negotiations. My delegation, again, would fully support your move to take action on the draft decision. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States of America. I now give the floor to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, actually, as I mentioned in my earlier comments, my delegation is flexible on your proposal, but, at the same time, as a matter of principle, we need to give an opportunity to all member States to contribute to the process of decision-making in this body. It could enhance all member States' sense of

ownership of the outcomes. I think we need an opportunity for all member States to be heard and I therefore request you to take into consideration the request by those member States that need further consultations with their capitals and with their delegations in this respect. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I now give the floor to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Díaz Mendoza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Good morning. How are you, colleagues? Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the delegation of Cuba on the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We are delighted with this very important step.

At the same time, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for your efforts to bring us to a consensus on this issue in the two draft decisions that you have presented to us. However, I believe, as other delegations have indicated, that we still have time; we still have a few days left this week to take into consideration the legitimate concerns of the delegations that have expressed misgivings or raised issues regarding the substance of the text.

I believe that it is important for all the delegations to be heard and for us to arrive at a text that is acceptable to everyone; this is my first point. The second point concerns the presidential statement. Indeed, as you all know, this was a problem for my delegation precisely because we do not understand why, in the first paragraph at least, it is indicated that this is a decision of the Conference on Disarmament, when in fact it is a presidential statement. This duality was not very clear, nor was the question of how it was going to be reflected in the final document of our work. It was very important for us to have this clarified, but now we are opting for another solution, which we believe could help us to break the deadlock and move forward with our work.

However, as I told you last time, last week, we have only an initial comment regarding these documents, which are still being studied by my capital; specifically, the schedule in decision 1. We understand that this is a result of rule 27 or 28 of the rules of procedure regarding what a programme of work should include. However, it is not clear to my delegation what is meant by “implementation of the arrangements for subsidiary bodies” or by “other organizational questions” under the other item, which we also have in the second section.

My delegation would like a slightly clearer explanation of what we are referring to here, since we see it only in sections 1 and 2, not in section 3, for example. We also fully understand this list of activities, although, honestly, it is obvious that there are statements in the Conference’s plenary meetings; we are obviously going to consider and adopt the annual report of the Conference.

We understand why the list was made, but it would be important to have a little more consideration and clarification on these matters, which could in the future have other kinds of substantive effects. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Mr. President. As this is the first time I have taken the floor today, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues from Colombia and New Zealand. The Chinese delegation would also like to thank you and the other Presidents of this session for your efforts to further advance our draft and for the new text that you have proposed.

I have listened attentively to all my colleagues’ statements today, and I have noticed that some have raised concerns about the draft text. Perhaps they will put forward further suggestions for improvement later on. Also, just now we have heard that many colleagues have suggested that, in your capacity as President, you should continue to conduct the necessary consultations or organize informal consultations in the Conference on Disarmament. I think their proposal is a reasonable one, precisely because we, as members of the Conference, have continuously made efforts to resolve the issue of the programme of work.

Just now, some colleagues also mentioned that the day after tomorrow is the lunar new year, observed in many Asian countries, and that tomorrow we will thus celebrate New Year's Eve. This is true also for the Chinese delegation. However, in spite of this, if you would like to convene informal consultations of the Conference's membership on your draft tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, Friday, I would be more than willing to participate in them. This might also be a good way for Conference members to celebrate the lunar new year with us. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of China and wish him and all our Chinese colleagues and Asian friends who are celebrating the new year a happy new year.

I have no more requests for the floor. I thank you for those comments. There was one question from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on what was meant by the item "other organizational questions" in the proposed timetable for the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I am told this is standard language that has been on successive proposals for timetables for the work of the Conference for many years. I guess this, then, is the explanation.

Dear colleagues, usually I am very eager to continue consultations, however long they may take. And I have heard several requests going in that direction. But, at this very moment, I think the first responsibility of the President is to do anything to get to a positive result. And I repeat what I said: I think we went as far as we could. This is it. This is the moment of truth. I will ask you, then, whether we can adopt these two documents: CD/WP.633 and CD/WP.634. May I take it that we can adopt them?

The Syrian Arab Republic has the floor.

Mr. Ali (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to reiterate our position that we need further consultations on the proposed texts. We have submitted amendments to the secretariat and to your team, but these amendments and proposals have not been discussed and are not reflected in the two draft decisions. We therefore need to consult with the capital before adopting any decision presented now. We stress the need for further consultations on the draft documents presented. Thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. I would like to draw his attention to the fact that these proposals were circulated on Friday last week, so there was ample time to consider them or to seek instructions from the capital. There is no change to the text, so I do not see a reason to consult further. I now give the floor to India.

Mr. Sharma (India): I thank you, Mr. President. I believe a number of fellow delegations have supported our request for more consultations, including an informal meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, to discuss these proposals further.

However, you seem to have ignored those calls. It is the prerogative of any President to put any decision to a vote. I leave that choice to you, Mr. President, but India will not be able to join consensus on the decisions as they are worded and once again appeals to you to give us more time. Hold more informal consultations so that we can smooth over differences and join consensus on a programme of work which is satisfactory to all the delegations.

With that appeal, then, I will conclude my intervention. But in the current form we are unable to join consensus, Mr. President. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of India. And I now give the floor to the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to align myself with the request of the representative of Syria and the Ambassador of India to continue consultations on the two draft documents. The Russian Federation cannot support your proposal to adopt these documents. Our position here is absolutely clear – we do not consider these documents a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. We still do not understand the value of these documents compared to those adopted in 2018 and how these new documents will help us to move forward, achieve significant results and avoid discussions that have already taken place at the Conference many times.

We regret that the draft documents circulated do not contain proposals to begin negotiations on any agenda item. Therefore, we do not consider these documents to be draft

proposals or draft decisions on a programme of work. However, we are willing to continue taking part in any consultations that are organized. Here, I would like to support my Indian colleague's request for the presidency to hold informal consultations with all delegations so that, to the extent possible, we can work our way towards the compromise we so badly need. Finally, I would like to say once again that we cannot support these two documents or join the consensus.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation. I now give the floor to Cuba.

Mr. Delgado Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Forgive me for asking for the floor again, but what is happening at the moment is really rather strange.

It is true that at 6.35 p.m. on Friday, 5 February, you, or rather the secretariat, sent around a message stating that you, the President of the Conference on Disarmament, on behalf of the group of the annual session's six Presidents, had asked the secretariat to circulate two documents and a presidential statement.

Right now, I have two suggestions: the first is to move the meeting immediately into informal consultations. If you do not wish to, then we will be forced to ask for the floor again, for which I apologize in advance. This is my first request to you, and perhaps you could even clarify, at some point, whether what you are doing now is by agreement of the group of the six Presidents or in your capacity as President. I agree with the Ambassador of India that you as President have the power to proceed as you are doing. I do not question it; in fact, the documents are documents of the President, not of the group of the six Presidents, but it would be interesting to hear if the action you wish to take or the direction in which you wish to take this meeting is the result of internal consultations in the group, because from what I have heard, only one delegation has asked you to proceed as you are doing. This is also a necessary clarification, because, Mr. President, under the email circulated by the secretariat is an email from you in which you say that, after careful consideration of the proposals made by the delegations, the group of the six Presidents has drafted a set of proposals and put them forward for consideration, and then you continue by saying that, at the next meeting of the Conference, you intend to examine this discussion and obviously evaluate the possible adoption of the set of proposals; and you do say "possible adoption", not just "adoption".

I would therefore like clarification on a number of questions in order to know where we are heading in this meeting, because our delegation is normally quite flexible, and we are even almost convinced that we could support a text such as the one you are inviting us to consider right now. But we do not like being pressured or surprised for reasons that are not entirely clear.

I would like a clear explanation of these issues before requesting the floor again. I hope not to have to do so, but, Mr. President, I believe that being in a hurry to make a decision when it is not necessary to do so now, at this very moment – because we could have a second working meeting this afternoon, or we could decide tomorrow or even as late as Friday under your presidency, or we could continue working under the other presidencies – would not be a good way of proceeding in terms of fostering a good environment in the Conference.

Normally, when a document is circulated for adoption, there is a note to that effect, and 24 hours are given for it to be consulted as it stands. I understand that this is the case. It is a good practice that we have followed, and one that I hope will be maintained. Thank you, Mr. President.

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

Mr. Ju Yong-chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation indeed commends your effort and determination to bring about positive results so as to take the Conference on Disarmament forward this year.

However, it is clearly indicated in the rules of procedure of the Conference that the Conference adopts its decisions by consensus. Some countries still have different views on the draft decisions, meaning that there is no consensus on these documents. My delegation underlines the importance of adhering to the principle of consensus in the work of the

Conference and would appreciate it if you, the President, provided more time for consultations either in bilateral format or in informal meetings of the Conference.

I would like to conclude my comments with the saying “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”. And there is no need to rush. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Dear colleagues, it is clear that we do not have consensus at this stage. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the floor. Please be brief, because we are reaching our time limit.

Ms. Díaz Mendoza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I would just like to quickly support the comments made by the delegation of Cuba. Ambassador, you have done an excellent job. I think you are taking us in the right direction. I believe that there are not too many pending elements. We could make an effort in the remaining days, when you decide to convene the next meetings, to reach consensus. I believe that you are leading us to a successful outcome and that we could make an effort to that end. I would just like to support you in your efforts and support the documents that you have presented.

In principle, my delegation could accept draft decision 1 without any difficulty; we have some concerns, but we can work on them. However, I would like to reiterate my delegation’s support for you and its belief that we should continue our deliberations, as we are very close to reaching consensus. Thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. As I was saying, it is clear there is no consensus at this stage. I heard very clearly the Ambassador of India and the representative of the Russian Federation saying as much. I take note, of course, of that and deeply regret it. Again, I think we had an opportunity to take a decision on a programme of work. I regret that it was not possible, and, of course, as President until the end of this week, I will continue my efforts to reach that consensus.

Thank you very much. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.