
Conference on Disarmament

English

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

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President: Mr. Yuri Borissov Sterk (Bulgaria)



The President: I call to order the 1573rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished delegates, I now turn to the speakers remaining on my list for today's thematic discussion, and the first to speak will be Ambassador Gamaleldin of Egypt.

Mr. Gamaleldin (Egypt): Mr. President, thank you for organizing this week's plenary discussion on agenda item 2. I would like to thank the speakers who have contributed to these discussions on Tuesday and in today's plenary meeting. My delegation fully associates itself with the statement of the Group of 21 that was delivered by the delegation of Iraq in the last plenary meeting.

Given the unfortunate circumstances that the Conference on Disarmament has been suffering from and the continued stalemate, it is of importance to use those thematic discussions to reflect on the matters at hand and the reasons that might have contributed to this regrettable situation. This week our discussion is focused on agenda item 2, entitled "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters".

Before making my remarks on the subtopics that you have proposed for discussion under this item, it is important to take a step back and reflect on the origins of this agenda item. Allow me to use the term "going back to basics", something we have often talked about lately but have unfortunately not practised, as this will allow us to put things in perspective and avoid futile discussions and peripheral issues.

The *raison d'être* of the Conference is nuclear disarmament. And its agenda was articulated around this fact. If we intend to be successful in our efforts, we should be advancing the work of the Conference under this agenda item from this vantage point. Any topics that are considered under this agenda item should contribute directly and clearly to nuclear disarmament. Proposals that are based on narrow national interests, with the aim of limiting the agenda item to marginal issues and non-proliferation measures alone, will not be acceptable and will only lead us to deadlock.

While we acknowledge that risk-reduction measures and trust- or confidence-building measures could contribute positively to peace and security, they should be used neither as an excuse to renege on legal obligations nor in a bid to further delay the commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Those measures are often promoted as a means to build confidence between rival parties and to establish favourable circumstances that might allow progress on nuclear disarmament. The ambiguity, looseness and preconditional nature of those concepts make them doubtful for mainstream non-nuclear-weapon States, which was evident in the level of interest in the last plenary meeting. What is more puzzling is that we often witness nuclear-weapon States promoting, on the one hand, these concepts in their statements and, on the other hand, conducting policy reviews to modernize and expand their nuclear arsenals and decrease transparency. In this regard, Egypt strongly believes that as long as the stalemate in advancing nuclear disarmament persists, the world will certainly continue to suffer from risk, stress and insecurity.

Now to the matter at hand. The question of fissile materials has gradually and justifiably taken its place at the forefront of the issues considered by the Conference on Disarmament, especially considering the inseparable linkage between the issue and nuclear disarmament. Against this backdrop, Egypt strongly believes that the Conference should start negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable legally binding instrument banning fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. That 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 bans only future production is not a priority and will not represent a significant contribution to the goal of nuclear disarmament.

Egypt participated actively and constructively in all the recent endeavours dedicated to making progress on this issue – namely, the relevant Group of Governmental Experts, the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group and the work of subsidiary body 2 in the Conference on Disarmament in 2018. Egypt stands ready to contribute to any future efforts that may lead to progress on this issue and looks 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. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Egypt for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of China.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Mr. President.

Since the end of the cold war in the 1990s, the international community has worked together to advance the multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes. After concluding negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Conference on Disarmament went on to reach a consensus in principle on establishing an ad hoc committee to conduct negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. At that time, I myself participated in the work of the Conference in this regard.

The persistent failure to begin negotiations on banning the production of fissile material is closely tied to related developments and changes in the global strategic security situation over the past twenty years and more.

To start with, the strategic security environment has been evolving. The super-Powers with the largest nuclear arsenals have continued to disrupt the framework of the international nuclear arms control regime, and have made the challenges to global strategic balance and stability presented by strategic missile defence systems and the weaponization of outer space ever more real and prominent. The debate around the priorities of the multilateral arms control and disarmament process continues to this day, with a direct negative impact on the efforts of the Conference to agree on a programme of work with a negotiating mandate.

Secondly, new regional challenges for non-proliferation have emerged. The nuclear tests in South Asia in 1998 and the current nuclear issues of Iran and the Korean Peninsula, which are of widespread concern in the international community, have objectively brought the non-proliferation dimension of the issue of fissile material for nuclear weapons into sharper focus. Ensuring that the proposed treaty achieves the dual objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation at the same time has become a real issue for us.

Thirdly, the nuclear strategies and policies of the countries concerned have undergone a readjustment, raising new questions in the international arms control community about the value, credibility and effectiveness of the so-called initiatives and commitments to ban the production of fissile material, including so-called production moratoriums.

The prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, is a major item on the agenda of the Conference. The areas and issues covered by this item are indeed broad, and a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons is only one among them. China supports the negotiation in the Conference of a treaty that is non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable, based on the mandates contained in General Assembly resolution 48/75 and Conference document CD/1299.

A future treaty should be guided by the important principles of maintaining global strategic stability and undiminished security for all. As the sole authoritative multilateral disarmament negotiating body within the United Nations framework, and with a membership that includes all stakeholders in the negotiations to ban the production of fissile material, the Conference is the only appropriate venue for negotiating such a treaty. Any attempt to negotiate it in a different forum would be unrealistic and irresponsible, and would not produce a treaty that was truly authoritative, effective and universal.

Such a treaty would touch upon many complex political, military and technological issues. All countries' legitimate security concerns and rights to peaceful uses of nuclear energy need to be fully accommodated in the lead-up to negotiations as well as in the actual negotiation process itself, along with a balanced consideration of the effectiveness, inclusiveness and feasibility of such a treaty. The scope, definitions, verification mechanism and entry-into-force provisions of such a treaty should all serve the treaty's overall objectives.

China supports the establishment by the Conference on Disarmament of a subsidiary body on the "prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters" agenda item, as an important component of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. During the

tenure of this subsidiary body, all parties could undertake substantive work with regard to the new circumstances previously mentioned and other issues of all kinds entailed by negotiations on banning the production of fissile material, so as to be thoroughly prepared to launch such negotiations when the conditions for them are ripe.

The Chinese delegation will seriously and responsibly participate in discussions related to a fissile material cut-off treaty, and will play a constructive role in these discussions. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of China. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you very much indeed for organizing today's thematic discussion on agenda item 2, and in particular the three excellent and substantive presentations we heard this morning.

Mr. President, I can be brief, because the United Kingdom's position on the question of fissile material is simple, long-standing and well known. The United Kingdom has had a voluntary moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices since 1995. In 1998, the United Kingdom was the first nuclear-weapon State to declare the total size of its fissile material stocks, and voluntarily placed all fissile material no longer required for defence purposes under international safeguards. This material 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.

The United Kingdom continues to believe that the path to a world without nuclear weapons has to include a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. We will continue to call for the start and early conclusion of negotiations of such a treaty in the Conference on Disarmament, as an essential step along that path. We do not believe that there is any issue pertaining to this treaty, including its scope, that cannot be resolved during the course of negotiations or that there is any reason for the start of negotiations to be further delayed.

We will continue to do all we can to explore ways of moving forward with a fissile material cut-off treaty. The United Kingdom played an active role in the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts in 2014 and 2015, in the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group in 2017–2018 and in subsidiary body 2 of this Conference in 2018. As our three presenters have reminded us, these processes deepened the dialogue on a fissile material cut-off treaty and identified the issues upon which future negotiators will need to focus. All that remains is for those negotiators – for us, Mr. President – to get to work. Thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom and now give the floor to the next speaker, the delegate of Turkey.

Mr. Işılak (Turkey): Thank you, Mr. President. Since this is the first time I take the floor under your presidency, please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

Turkey aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. In our national capacity, we would like to deliver the following statement.

Mr. President, presentations given on nuclear disarmament verification and nuclear risk reduction in the last two weeks were very useful, and I would also like to thank the panellists for their in-depth analyses. The decision of the group of the annual session's six Presidents to keep holding thematic debates is realistic and timely. Our discussions on the agenda items could become food for thought in other forums, especially the upcoming Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference.

Confidence between States has eroded in recent years. Modernization programmes are under way, and new technologies that increase ambiguity in international security are arising. The nuclear-weapon States must have sincere bilateral/multilateral dialogues to restore trust and confidence and reduce nuclear risk by lowering the likelihood of such

misinterpretation or miscalculation as can be caused especially by computerized intervention. Transparency in nuclear doctrines and arsenals is crucial.

We support the commencement of negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and verifiable treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices at the Conference on Disarmament. This will contribute to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to achieving the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

We are of the opinion that negotiations should be comprehensive and non-discriminatory. Therefore, any future treaty should also address the issue of stockpiles, effective verification and irreversibility. It goes without saying that all national concerns regarding a possible treaty can be brought to the table during negotiations.

We continue to urge the remaining annex 2 States of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to urgently sign and ratify the agreement. We also call on nuclear-weapon States to refrain from acts that are against the object and purpose of the Treaty.

Turkey is participating in the work of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. We support the ongoing work and dialogue through the initiative Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament.

We are of the view that the “22 stepping stones” proposed by the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament could be very helpful in mobilizing political momentum for a substantive outcome at the NPT Review Conference.

We continue to seek the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, while encouraging the countries of the Middle East to continue dialogue in this regard, as agreed in the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and at the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Before I conclude, let me once again emphasize our sincere hope for a way out of the stalemate that we are in at the Conference on Disarmament, a way out that might lead to our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the delegate of Turkey for his statement and now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lim Sang-beom (Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, let me join others in thanking you for your leadership. I would also like to extend my delegation’s appreciation to the three panellists for their excellent presentations this morning.

Mr. President, the earliest possible commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, has been one of the priorities of my delegation. We believe it is indeed the next logical step forward after the finalization of the negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty more than twenty years ago. A verifiable ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices will contribute to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as well as nuclear security.

The international community has been preparing the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty within the Conference and Disarmament and beyond. We believe it is now time to embark upon the negotiations on the treaty in the Conference without any further delay. All the groundwork is in place, including the consensus report from the Group of Governmental Experts and the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group. Another consensus report agreed upon here in the Conference as a result of discussion in the subsidiary body in 2018 is one of our latest efforts and should not be wasted either.

Mr. President, while we are ready to remain as flexible on details of technical discussions over such a treaty as possible, let me briefly recap our national positions on some key aspects of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

First, on the definition of fissile material. In general, defining the key element provides clarity and a common vision of the treaty’s objective and scope. It has an impact on the means and method of verification in this case. We therefore believe a treaty needs to define, *inter alia*, fissile material. And for that purpose, we believe that, in the context of a treaty,

unirradiated direct-use material would serve best as the definition of fissile material, striking the right balance between the treaty's credibility and effectiveness.

Second, on the scope. We are of the view that the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein, which was agreed by consensus, remain valid as a basis for conducting negotiations in the Conference. While we support the early commencement of negotiations, based on pending future production, we also believe that the issue of existing stockpiles cannot be simply brushed aside. The treaty could, for example, include language in the preamble encouraging States to undertake voluntary measures to reduce past production. At the same time, my delegation, drawing on the concept of non-increase with regard to existing stockpiles, also supports banning the acquisition and transfer of all prohibited material. We also believe this diversion of fissile material for military use should be discussed.

Third, on the issue of verification. We should negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty. Several approaches have been presented by delegates, each of which has clear pros and cons. Since it is difficult to develop a full picture of a treaty's verification regime before agreeing on the treaty's scope and definitions, we would simply like to emphasize that in discussing specific inspection methodologies, we should try to strike a balance between effectiveness and cost. On governance, we advocate a hybrid of a minimal FMCT organization with key decision-making authorities and an FMCT verification unit within the International Atomic Energy Agency that is separate from the Department of Safeguards. This would not only enable cost-sharing but also allow us to benefit from the vast expertise of the Agency.

It is important to recognize different views and perspectives on key elements, but we should go beyond to identify and consolidate commonalities. I believe we already have commonalities on key issues. It is time for us to begin to work together in a constructive way. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea for his statement and give the floor to the next speaker, the delegate for Australia.

Ms. Hill (Australia): Thank you very much, Mr. President, and good afternoon, colleagues. Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening these discussions on this important topic. I would also like to thank our panellists today for their informative remarks.

Australia reiterates its strong belief that a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) has the potential to deliver substantial security benefits, furthering the twin goals of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. By capping the amount of fissile material available for weapons use, such a treaty would be an essential step towards irreversible nuclear disarmament. It would also further tighten controls on fissile material, reducing the risk of fissile material's leaking to proliferators or terrorists. For more than twenty years, Australia has consistently urged the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on such a treaty. We continue to be deeply disappointed by the failure of the Conference to do so. We see no substantive reason why negotiations cannot start on this treaty now – with differences fleshed out over the course of discussions. That is the purpose of negotiations.

The Conference was purpose-built to negotiate disarmament-related treaties by consensus, ensuring that the national interests of all member States are taken into account. We do ourselves no favours by further delaying the commencement of negotiations on this important treaty.

As others have noted today, valuable work on this issue was done by the Group of Governmental Experts in 2014 and 2015 and by the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group in 2017 and 2018. And as Ambassador Gabriëlse has outlined today, useful discussions on a fissile material cut-off treaty took place in the Conference in 2018 in the context of subsidiary body 2.

At that time, Conference member States underscored the value of further work on this topic. Some delegations suggested work on treaty elements – for example, on technical and scientific aspects, scope, definitions, verification, and legal and institutional arrangements or trust- and confidence-building measures.

Australia's view is that we should not wait any longer to advance the exploratory work on some of the elements that could feature in any future treaty. Further, pending finalization of such a treaty, we urge States with nuclear weapons that are yet to do so to declare and implement a moratorium on fissile material production.

Put simply, negotiating a treaty to end the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes has long been a logical and vital next step in the long road towards ridding the world of nuclear weapons. We urge all members of this Conference to cooperate in this endeavour. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the delegate of Australia for her statement and now give the floor to the delegate for Belgium.

Ms. Marchand (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank you for organizing the three thematic discussions over the past two weeks. These rich debates were particularly relevant ahead of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I would also like to thank the speakers, Ms. Maitre, Ms. Rockwood and Ambassador Gabriëlse, for their useful contributions to our discussions today on item 2 of our agenda.

My country aligns itself with this morning's statement by the European Union and wishes to highlight a few issues in its national capacity. Belgium is firmly committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, an objective that, in our opinion, must be achieved by degrees. An important aspect of this gradual approach is the adoption of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We call for the immediate commencement of negotiations on the adoption of a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. Such a treaty is the next logical step in the implementation of the provisions of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is vital for nuclear disarmament but also for achieving our non-proliferation goals. It also helps render the reduction of nuclear arsenals irreversible.

Belgium welcomes the efforts made in recent years in this area, and it appreciates in particular the leadership of Canada and the excellent work of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group. This work has helped to prepare the ground and determine the potential provisions of a future treaty. The deliberations also revealed that definitions, verification and institutional and legal mechanisms are important aspects of the treaty. They also made it clear that all these substantive issues, including the matter of the treaty's scope, can be resolved only through effective negotiations on the treaty. The issue of stocks does not require a binary decision: it can be dealt with satisfactorily only as part of negotiations and it must no longer be a determining factor in the opening of negotiations for a treaty.

My country notes that the issue of definitions is also important because definitions would have a direct bearing on the treaty's scope. A fissile material cut-off treaty should define, *inter alia*, fissile material and fissile material production and should clearly delineate the facilities relevant for such a treaty. This matter will require careful consideration, taking into account the experience gained under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system. Of specific interest in this regard is the definition of "direct-use material" used by IAEA. A future treaty must not prohibit the production of fissile material for civilian use or interfere with States' right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

A strong verification system would make the treaty more robust. My delegation is of the view that this system must be based on the principle of irreversibility and that it must address production and reprocessing facilities. It must not place additional burdens on States that already comply with existing verification standards and should avoid duplicating existing obligations and safeguarding mechanisms. Instead, safeguards should be extended to military production facilities that are not currently covered. It would therefore be logical for the verification system to be established under the aegis of IAEA.

My delegation welcomes once again the efforts made in the Conference in 2018, within the framework of subsidiary body 2, led by the Ambassador of the Netherlands, to identify areas of convergence. These efforts must continue, and the Conference must endeavour to adopt a programme of work in the near future that will enable the launch of

negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, without which it will lose all credibility. Every effort must be made to break this deadlock, and those efforts require renewed political will to move forward together towards a common goal.

Lastly, the current obstacle to negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty must not prevent us from taking the important steps that we can and must take going forward. All nuclear-weapon States have the duty to declare and uphold a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. We welcome the declaration of such a moratorium by four nuclear-weapon States and encourage the only nuclear-weapon State that has not adopted a formal moratorium to join them. That would send a strong, unified signal from the nuclear-weapon States in support of nuclear disarmament. At the same time, nuclear-weapon States that are not parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty must take the same step and facilitate the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Such moratoriums must, of course, be accompanied by the necessary transparency measures, including verification activities in anticipation of the verification system that would be put in place under a fissile material cut-off treaty. In that regard, my country particularly appreciates the transparency demonstrated by France in its operations to dismantle its fissile material production capabilities, including through a field visit to the former production sites at Pierrelatte and Marcoule last year, in which my delegation was able to participate. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Belgium.

(*spoke in English*)

The next speaker is the delegate for Norway.

Mr. Rydning (Norway): Thank you, Mr. President, including for organizing a timely thematic debate on another very pressing issue. And then thanks also to the panellists for the excellent framing of today's discussion.

Norway attaches great importance to agenda item 2. Preventing nuclear war through effective disarmament and non-proliferation measures is fundamental to us. The prompt negotiation and conclusion of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty is in that regard a top and increasingly pressing priority and a priority for which we have to see unanimous support at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

Decades of discussions both in the Conference on Disarmament and in other forums, notably the Group of Governmental Experts, the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group, led by Canada, and subsidiary body 2 at this Conference in 2018, have set the scene, so the next logical step is to start negotiations, which could also include a phased approach to the elimination of existing stocks.

The question of a fissile material cut-off treaty has led the Conference on Disarmament to a decades-long impasse. It is time to move on. We all repeat the mantra that the Conference should get back to its core business – namely, negotiating. Furthermore, it seems that we are all in agreement that an agreement on fissile material is overdue, so we just cannot agree on the specifics of what it is to regulate. But that is, of course, exactly what negotiations are supposed to solve.

In conclusion, Norway calls on all parties to show some flexibility so that in 2022 we can finally start the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament and take another step further from the risk of nuclear war. Thank you.

The President: I thank the delegate of Norway for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, thank you for providing me the floor to contribute to our thematic debate.

We were surprised to hear from you that the topic of today's thematic debate was fissile materials for nuclear weapons. This is the first time that this topic is being suggested for discussion at the Conference on Disarmament, and India strongly disagrees with this topic. The way the topic is framed does not indicate whether the purpose is to encourage production

of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or ban their production, whether we are discussing characteristics, quality, procurement, sourcing or safeguarding of fissile materials and their use for nuclear weapons. In our view, this topic belongs to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), not to the Conference on Disarmament. India suggests that we keep our discussions focused on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which has been an integral part of agenda item 2 and is a core issue on the agenda of this Conference.

We are satisfied that the panellists adhered to the core issue, a fissile material cut-off treaty, and I would like to thank Ms. Emmanuelle Maitre, Ms. Laura Rockwood and Ambassador Robbert Gabriëlse for their excellent presentations.

India aligns itself with the Group of 21 statement delivered by Iraq under this agenda item.

Without prejudice to the priority India attaches to nuclear disarmament, we support the negotiation in this forum of a universal, non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty that meets India's national security interests. India is a nuclear-weapon State and a responsible member of the international community and will approach as such negotiations of such a treaty.

This Conference may recall that the first proposal for a treaty of this sort, in the form of the Baruch Plan, which included the idea of stopping any further production of nuclear materials for weapons purposes, goes back more than seventy-five years, to 13 June 1946. General Assembly resolution 48/75L, adopted by consensus in 1993, envisaged such a treaty as a significant contribution to non-proliferation in all its aspects. India co-sponsored this resolution and has supported all subsequent resolutions on this issue in the General Assembly.

India supported the establishment of an ad hoc committee on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference in 1995 and in 1998 and did not stand in the way of consensus in 2009 on the decision contained in document CD/1864, which provided, inter alia, for the establishment of a working group to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. India also supported the proposal contained in document CD/2014 tabled by Mexico as Conference President in 2015. The United States and France, too, have contributed to these efforts through their draft texts tabled in 2006 and 2015, respectively.

In 2018, in the most recent substantive work on a fissile material cut-off treaty, India participated in the work of subsidiary body 2 under the able leadership of Ambassador Robbert Gabriëlse of the Netherlands and joined consensus on the outcome report, contained in document CD/2139. Since 2019, the Conference has been prevented, now for the third year in a row, from commencing substantive work on such a treaty. However, this does not undermine the value of efforts to advance our agenda, including on a fissile material cut-off treaty, made by various presidencies in the last three years, including the most recent ones made this year by Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve of Belgium, Ambassador Gonçalo de Barros Carvalho e Mello Mourão of Brazil and you, Mr. President.

India joined the international consensus on such a treaty in 1993, as it reflected with clarity the common understanding of the basic objective of the treaty. The mandate for the proposed treaty was explicitly reflected in General Assembly resolution 48/75L and reconfirmed by the Shannon report in document CD/1299 – that is, to “negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices”. This mandate was also reaffirmed by the Conference in 1998 and 2009 in its consensus decisions and reiterated in relevant resolutions by the General Assembly. India is against reopening this mandate, as it provides a clear and feasible basis for taking forward negotiations on this very complex subject. Changing the fundamental parameters of a proposed treaty that enjoys broad international support is, in our view, intended only to create new obstacles to the early commencement of negotiations.

As to the scope, the treaty must be a treaty for banning the future production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. In our view, a fissile material cut-off treaty is essentially about capping the future production of fissile material for weapons purposes.

The obligations and responsibilities arising from the treaty must apply in a non-discriminatory manner to all States parties directly affected by the treaty's obligations and responsibilities. The treaty would be global in character, thus excluding any regional specificity. A fissile material cut-off treaty, in our view, is certainly not a regional arms control treaty.

The treaty should continue to allow the unhindered production of fissile material for permitted purposes under the treaty on a non-discriminatory basis. This would include the production of fuel for civil nuclear energy without prejudice to the variety of fuel cycles currently in use or envisaged for the future. Permitted purposes would also include non-proscribed military activities, including production and use of fuel for naval propulsion.

Mr. President, our support for negotiations on such a treaty in the Conference is consistent with India's interest in strengthening the global non-proliferation regime, to which a measure of strategic predictability and a baseline for future global nuclear disarmament efforts would be added. Given this objective and the Conference's vocation, it is essential that all relevant countries participate in these negotiations in the Conference and contribute to a successful outcome. For its part, India has actively participated in every relevant forum on this subject, including the Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/53 and the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/259, and welcomed their respective reports adopted by consensus. At the same time, India has noted that the work of neither group amounted to pre-negotiations or negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which should take place in the Conference on the basis of the agreed mandate.

The reports of the two groups underlined that the treaty and its negotiation in the Conference remain a priority enjoying broad international support and that document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein remain the most suitable basis for the commencement of negotiations. In our view, this was the most significant conclusion of these consensus reports. These reports constitute a valuable reference even though they do not bind the hands of future negotiators and are without prejudice to national positions. These reports are the outcome of the most thorough intergovernmental assessment of a fissile material cut-off treaty of recent years and as such deserve in-depth consideration. We join others in commending these reports to members of the Conference not represented on the Group of Governmental Experts and look forward to a productive discussion and hope that they will impart much-needed momentum for the commencement of negotiations on such a treaty in this Conference.

As to the suggestions for declaring a moratorium, India would like to underline that a moratorium on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices cannot be a substitute for a relevant treaty. With due respect to those who call for such a moratorium, I may remind them that such a moratorium by its very nature is voluntary, reversible and not verifiable, unlike a cut-off treaty, which will impose treaty obligations and will be verifiable and irreversible. A moratorium will only weaken the resolve to negotiate such a treaty and set us back. This would be contrary to our mandate and objective. India, therefore, does not support the call for a moratorium.

India supports the Conference on Disarmament as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, and we hope that its member States will redouble efforts to enable the Conference to commence substantive work at an early date.

To conclude, this Conference should be allowed to fulfil its mandate as a negotiating forum by commencing negotiations on the basis of an early decision on its programme of work. In this respect, document CD/1864, the last consensus programme of work, adopted in 2009 under the Algerian presidency, remains our collective signpost. We hope that we get there sooner rather than later. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of India. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Ukraine.

Mr. Klymenko (Ukraine): Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, distinguished delegates, I would like to express my gratitude to the Bulgarian presidency for organizing this thematic discussion on agenda item 2, prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters. Special thanks to the panellists for giving insight into the topic. Ukraine aligns itself with the European Union's statement on a fissile material cut-off treaty delivered earlier today.

In my national capacity, I would like to dwell on the following: in view of the potentially apocalyptic consequences of nuclear war, it is clearly in the security interest of the entire international community to reduce nuclear risks. This necessitates a multilayered effort to slow the spread of nuclear weapons and technologies, reduce nuclear stockpiles, secure nuclear materials and prevent the proliferation of delivery systems for nuclear weapons. Thus, it is natural for nuclear risk reduction to be one of the topical issues in the course of the upcoming 2021 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which has the important task of summing up the five-year period of operation of this key pillar of the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation regime, as well as of shaping its future.

Let me try to point to a couple of the issues mentioned earlier relating to reduction of nuclear risks, which constitutes a particular concern for my country. First, control of nuclear stockpiles and capabilities. Most studies of nuclear risk reduction logically focus on measures specifically tailored to nuclear arsenals. As we all know, on 3 February 2021, it was agreed to extend the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, or the New START, for another five years. Although the agreement is considered a major breakthrough, we have to take into account the fact that START III, concluded back in 2010, does not cover the new types of weapons that the Russian President revealed to the world on 1 March 2018. Let me recall that on that day in his address to the Federal Assembly, he announced the development of several new types of strategic offensive weapons.

There is reason to believe that Russia will continue to actively develop its offensive systems of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons and from time to time to blackmail those who condemn its aggressive actions with sophisticated nuclear weapons. Tactical nuclear weapons pose an immediate and direct threat to Ukraine's security. That is especially worrying against a backdrop that – after the recent cycle of escalation and growing tension along the border of Ukraine, where Russia had supposedly been running military drills – involved the pulling back of only a few thousand troops out of up to 110,000. And as our Foreign Minister has said, it was withdrawal without withdrawal. It is even more concerning that Russia has been upgrading its military presence in temporarily occupied Crimea with nuclear capabilities, undermining the non-nuclear status of the Ukrainian peninsula. And this is the behaviour of a permanent member of the Security Council with a special responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It certainly requires particular attention of the international community.

Now, coming back to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Though, overall, the Treaty can be considered rather successful in helping contain the spread of nuclear weapons, the 2021 Review Conference will take place in a particularly fragile international environment. The current and expected reshaping of the traditional arms control architecture, renewed strategic competition and the polarization of the multilateral debate on nuclear weapons have significantly contributed to this uncertainty. And one of the key features of such uncertain times is the absence of trust.

That leads me to the second point I wanted to draw your attention to – but let me first remind you of some figures. When, in 1991, Ukraine gained its independence from the Soviet Union, my country held the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal, including an estimated 1,900 strategic warheads, 176 intercontinental ballistic missiles and 44 strategic bombers.

In December 1994, Ukraine, having voluntarily given up its nuclear arsenal, became a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon State. It was the greatest real contribution to nuclear disarmament and the preservation of peace and security on our planet ever. What did we receive in exchange? Negative security assurances in the form of the so-

called Budapest Memorandum. We all know quite well what happened next. I have spoken out repeatedly on this regrettable issue since 2014.

Ukraine has always considered negative security assurances a practical element of reducing insecurity, which in most cases is considered one of the key motives for the development of nuclear weapon capabilities. That Budapest Memorandum was a de facto failure. We repeatedly raised the issue about the need to refine that instrument with an additional mechanism for ensuring its implementation and to incorporate direct and reliable guarantees of peace and security, including military support in case of threats to territorial integrity. It should also include, among other aspects, provisions on the response procedure by the international community in the event of violation by a nuclear State of the sovereign territorial integrity and security of a non-nuclear State. It would further dissuade States from acquiring nuclear weapons, as well as improve mutual confidence and trust, thereby strengthening the non-proliferation regime and fostering a new brand of regional and global security. Without such changes, the example of Ukraine will encourage no country in the world to believe in security insurance.

Given the importance to nuclear risk reduction of the two topics I have just described, I would ask the panellists to elaborate, if possible, on what steps, in their view, are feasible at this stage to cope with the mentioned challenges – I mean, new types of nuclear weapons beyond the scope of existing treaties and negative security assurances – and to streamline the nuclear risk reduction agenda further.

To conclude, let me express our belief that strategic risk reduction can strengthen international security and strategic stability by complementing arms control measures and deterrence policies. Thus, the international community has to restore trust and adopt a strategic approach to nuclear risk reduction. And trust is achievable by concrete deeds – first of all, *pacta sunt servanda*. I thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Ukraine for his statement. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. Beerwerth (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor and for putting this important topic, a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), on the agenda of today's meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to thank the three presenters for their informed input.

At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to express Germany's full alignment with the statement delivered by the European Union on a fissile material cut-off treaty. To underline the importance of starting negotiations on such a treaty without further delay, we would like to share some additional national remarks.

Nuclear disarmament, ultimately leading to "global zero", is possible only through a step-by-step approach. That has been the long-standing position of my country, and it has also been shared by many others today. And there are many steps that need to be taken, some smaller, some larger.

Last year, the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament presented a road map to advance nuclear disarmament. These practical steps, ranging from risk reduction and verification all the way to further stockpile reductions, also include a call for negotiating the treaty prohibiting fissile material production. Such a treaty would have a direct impact on both non-proliferation and disarmament. It remains one of the key elements to build trust. It is an indispensable step towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

In view of the differing opinions on the scope of the treaty, the only feasible approach to negotiations on such a treaty is a mandate that leaves this issue to be agreed upon in the course of the negotiations – i.e., the Shannon mandate. Important progress has been achieved in discussing such a treaty. Let me just name the 2014–2015 Group of Governmental Experts, the 2017–2018 high-level FMCT expert preparatory group and, lastly, subsidiary body 2 in the 2018 session of the Conference on Disarmament. We need to build upon these successes and maintain the momentum they achieved.

There is, then, a solid foundation for negotiations in the Conference; it all depends now on political will. At the same time, we call again on all relevant States to declare and

uphold moratoriums on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. This prevents the window for negotiations from closing further.

Starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty is a long overdue step. It is in our collective interest, it is possible, it is pragmatic. Let us start now. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement.

(spoke in French)

I now give the floor to Mr. Yann Hwang, Ambassador of France.

Mr. Hwang (France) *(spoke in French)*: Hello, dear colleagues, and thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor just after my dear colleague from Germany, next to whom I usually sit in the Council Chamber when we meet in person. My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and wishes to add a few comments in its national capacity.

First of all, I would like to commend the President for his excellent choice of speakers. We heard an excellent presentation this morning by Ms. Maitre of the Foundation for Strategic Research, who gave us a very thorough and comprehensive overview of the state of the discussions and the issues surrounding a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. There was also an excellent presentation by Ms. Rockwood, who spoke about the possible arrangements for such a treaty, including with regard to verification, and I thank her.

In addition, I would like to warmly thank our colleague Ambassador Gabriëlse of the Netherlands, who reminded us of all the work that was done in 2018 on this topic of a fissile material cut-off treaty, work that was further developed in 2018 – which, relative to the history of the Conference on Disarmament, was yesterday. It was very recent.

More generally, Mr. President, I must say that I am quite reassured by the lively debate that we have had today on this subject. All of this demonstrates and confirms that we should have a subsidiary body on a fissile material cut-off treaty; in fact, if action is to be taken in this disarmament forum, a subsidiary body is more than just advisable – it is a requirement. I would also like to say that I have some sympathy for what my colleague from India said about the title of our thematic discussion. We have seen this morning, and this afternoon, that the vast majority of the statements have focused on this theme of a fissile material cut-off treaty, and nothing else. It would therefore have been natural, perhaps, to describe this thematic discussion as a thematic discussion on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear use, since discussing such a treaty is what we have been doing.

The priority for my country remains the immediate launch, in the Conference, of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. This continues to be a priority, and we hope that these negotiations will take place on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. That is the Shannon mandate, which is well known to Conference members. Of all the possible advances in the field of nuclear disarmament, this is undoubtedly the one within easiest reach, as evidenced by the great deal of extensive work carried out up to 2018. This was noted by Ms. Maitre and by our colleague Ambassador Gabriëlse, as well as in the resolution adopted every year by the General Assembly of the United Nations by almost unanimous vote. A fissile material cut-off treaty is not only the next logical step but also an essential and invaluable step forward in making any tangible progress towards nuclear disarmament.

Such is the importance of this priority to my country that it was restated in the nuclear disarmament programme presented by the President of the French Republic in his speech at the War College in February 2020. The ongoing commitment of France is illustrated, firstly, by the attention it pays to ensuring that a fissile material cut-off treaty remains a priority for the Conference in a context where, under pressure from a very small handful of member States, the matter is being continuously eroded; we deplore this situation and call on all member States to continue their efforts to launch negotiations without delay. The adoption of document CD/2139 – the consensus report on subsidiary body 2 – in 2018 was an

extremely encouraging and substantial step forward that must guide our efforts. We would be in favour of rolling over the work on the subsidiary bodies.

Our commitment is also illustrated by our steadfast support for the work on a fissile material cut-off treaty as part of the process being pursued by the nuclear-weapon States, known as the P5 process. I would like to respond to our colleague from Canada, whom I thank very much for her question. I would like to reassure her that, under the coordination of France, work is continuing at the expert level within the framework of the P5 process with a view to securing a contribution by the nuclear-weapon States to the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. Lastly, as you know, and as has been mentioned by some delegations, in particular by Belgium, which I thank, we organized a visit in early March 2020 to the former military fissile material production facilities in Pierrelatte and Marcoule for all the ambassadors to the Conference. They were able to observe, in situ, an example of the specific commitment made by France, which is the only State in the world to have irreversibly dismantled its military uranium and plutonium enrichment sites.

Pending the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, and as many have done this morning and this afternoon, we, too, call on all nuclear-weapon States and those possessing nuclear weapons that have not yet done so to adopt a moratorium on the production of fissile material for military use.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would just like to provide a national response to the two questions posed by Ambassador Gabriëlse in his presentation. He asked whether subsidiary body 2, which met in 2018, could serve as a basis for future work. The answer is yes. From our point of view, it is obvious. It is clear that the Conference on Disarmament works on the basis of what has been done in the past and what has been adopted by consensus, and it would be very surprising if it were to be otherwise in the future.

As for the second question put to us by Ambassador Gabriëlse – namely, whether this work could be used in a concrete way and in what forum – as I said, we believe that it may be used in the Conference within the framework of a subsidiary body, whose creation we call for as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr. President.

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

(*spoke in English*)

The next speaker on my list is the delegate for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate your convening this meeting on the second item on the Conference on Disarmament agenda. We align ourselves with the Group of 21 statement delivered by the delegation of Iraq.

Mr. President, to help the Conference on Disarmament to break its long-standing deadlock, it is necessary to uphold its integrity and structure. That includes the critical importance of sticking to its agenda and using the thematic discussions in order to advance the substantive work of this body and help it fulfil its mandate.

Our plenary meetings during this week have focused on agenda item 2, the title of which is “Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters”. We should not lose sight of the *raison d’être* of the Conference, which is nuclear disarmament. This is the top priority and the most important goal of the Conference.

Mr. President, it is unacceptable to preach one thing and practise something else. We have heard almost from all delegations about the grave dangers posed by the existence of nuclear weapons. But some delegations are reluctant to emphasize the importance of starting negotiations on nuclear disarmament and instead propose futile discussions and marginal issues.

Any topics that are to be considered within the framework of agenda items 1, 2 and 3, should contribute directly and clearly to nuclear disarmament. Proposals that are based on narrow national interests with the aim of limiting the agenda items to marginal and misleading issues are not acceptable and will further contribute to the current deadlock in the Conference. We definitely prefer that our thematic debate be strictly in accordance with the

items as contained in Conference document CD/WP.630, which was approved at the beginning of our session.

For the Islamic Republic of Iran, upholding the role and the mandate of the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating body is of utmost importance. We believe that the existence of nuclear weapons is the gravest threat to international peace and security. That is why Iran believes nuclear disarmament should be the top priority of this body. Immediate action by the nuclear-weapon States in fulfilling their obligation under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to eliminate that threat through the total, transparent, irreversible and verifiable elimination of all nuclear weapons is indispensable. The reduction of surpluses of nuclear weapons and materials and attempts to sell them to non-nuclear-weapon States as a disarmament measure will in no way be sufficient to eliminate that danger.

I would like to reiterate the fact that the indefinite extension of the Treaty during the 1995 Review Conference was achieved as part of a package that included nuclear disarmament, extension of the Treaty and a resolution on the Middle East. When States parties met in 1995 to decide whether or not to extend Treaty indefinitely, it was vital to obtain a serious commitment to disarmament from the nuclear-weapon States. In fact, some reasonably argue that it was unlikely that the Treaty would have been extended indefinitely in 1995 without such a nuclear disarmament commitment. In the Final Document of the 1995 Review Conference, the nuclear-weapon States committed to pursue systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons.

The indefinite extension of the Treaty is inextricably linked to nuclear disarmament and the resolution on the Middle East. Those commitments were reflected in the 13 practical steps for nuclear disarmament of the 2000 Review Conference and the action plan on nuclear disarmament of the 2010 Review Conference.

The prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, requires nothing less than the compliance of nuclear-weapon States with their nuclear obligations under article VI of Non-Proliferation Treaty and the commitments they agreed to at previous NPT review conferences. In the same way, it requires putting away the nuclear umbrella and stopping nuclear-sharing, as they are in violation of Treaty obligations.

To make it clear, Mr. President, it is useful to recall some of the 13 practical steps. Step 4 mentions “the necessity of establishing in the Conference on Disarmament an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament”. Step 5 argues that the principle of irreversibility should “apply to nuclear disarmament, nuclear and other related arms control and reduction measures”. Step 6 is about “an unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament under article VI”. In accordance with step 9, the nuclear-weapon States are committed to “a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies to minimize the risk that these weapons will ever be used and to facilitate the process of their total elimination”.

Action 3 of the 2010 action plan stated that “the nuclear-weapon States commit to undertake further efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed, including through unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures”. Action 5 (c) commits the nuclear-weapon States to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament and to that end, they are required “to further diminish the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies”.

With their new nuclear policies, how can anyone claim that those countries remain committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons? How can a build-up of nuclear arsenals and modernization of nuclear weapons or vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons be interpreted as commitment to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons or to other obligations they agreed to take on? The Conference on Disarmament is entitled to ask what the benefits of those so-called gradual disarmament or risk-reduction steps are if they can easily be reversed and what the value of the step-by-step process is if the nuclear States can reverse course in material breach of their commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

With the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we have noticed that some States, instead of promoting nuclear disarmament, intend to sell misleading concepts at the upcoming NPT Review Conference. This does not bode well for the tenth NPT Review Conference. What is needed is a time-bound framework for implementation of those obligations and commitments. As was reiterated before, Iran strongly rejects any initiatives or concepts that aim to create conditionality for nuclear disarmament obligations, such as the initiative Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament, nuclear disarmament verification or any selective approaches to legally binding obligations and previous commitments to advance one issue or concept at the cost of others.

It is not clear, at least for our delegation, why some non-nuclear-weapon States are promoting these contradictory concepts and trying hard to portray themselves as supporters of nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear risk reduction is by no means a goal in itself and cannot substitute for nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament, not nuclear risk reduction, has always been the top item on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament and other international forums.

Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, allow me to say a few words on the topic at hand. The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the added value of any fissile material treaty as a concrete measure towards nuclear disarmament depends on the following criteria. First, the purpose of such a treaty should be defined in a manner that contributes to the realization of total nuclear disarmament. Second, the scope and definition of the treaty should provide grounds for banning all types of fissile material that are necessary for manufacturing nuclear explosive devices. Third, the treaty should provide for an effective, non-discriminatory verification system; the treaty will not have anything to do with the existing well-established Comprehensive Safeguards System that the International Atomic Energy Agency applies to non-nuclear-weapon States. The nuclear-weapon States and the States not parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty that have unsafe, guarded stockpiles of fissile material would be the only targets of the verification system of a fissile material treaty. Fourth, a fissile material treaty which does not cover the existing stocks of fissile material would be meaningless and futile. Therefore, the treaty should cover all past, present and future stocks of weapons-grade fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

Mr. President, the Islamic Republic of Iran expresses its gravest concern at the continued risk for humanity posed by the possibility that nuclear weapons are used and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the use, accidental or intentional, of nuclear weapons. We are ready to work with you and with other Conference on Disarmament Presidents and other delegations for the cause of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President: I thank the delegate for the Islamic Republic of Iran and now give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan

Mr. Hashmi (Pakistan): Thank you very much, Mr. President, including for convening this meeting. We also thank the panellists for their presentations.

Mr. President, we commend you for framing the topic of fissile materials in a correct, objective and balanced manner. We are at a loss to understand the discomfort of one delegation with the description of a treaty that would not grant an exemption to hundreds of tons of weapons-grade fissile material stocks. This sense of unease with regard to an accurate characterization can be explained only by the desire of those seeking to perpetuate asymmetries at the regional level. We align ourselves with the statement made by Iraq on behalf of the Group of 21.

As we continue our discussions on item 2 of the Conference on Disarmament's agenda, which is "Prevention of a nuclear war, including all related matters", I would like to start from where we left the discussion two days ago. This agenda, as we have said before, is organically linked to the larger goal of nuclear disarmament, which is to prevent a nuclear war. My delegation, like others, highlighted the context within which nuclear disarmament must happen and to which the Conference cannot be oblivious.

Today, we have heard yet again laments over the deadlock in the Conference that attribute it solely to a lack of negotiations on an instrument to ban fissile material production. The Conference's inability to fulfil its *raison d'être* – that is, negotiating a nuclear disarmament treaty – predates proposals on fissile materials in this body. And this impasse continues even today not for reasons related to a fissile material cut-off treaty but for other reasons, to which I will draw attention in a moment.

Attempts to limit the Conference's work to a non-proliferation measure – that is, prohibiting the production of fissile material – are self-serving. We have also heard today the mantra that a fissile material cut-off treaty alone is ripe for negotiations and that it alone can break the deadlock in the Conference. The high priests of such a treaty have also argued that the Conference should proceed with a treaty focused on non-proliferation and nothing else and that its nuclear disarmament aspects can be “discussed” or “raised” during the negotiations. These assertions are neither new nor surprising. They are decades-old ploys to deflect attention from scrutiny over non-compliance with nuclear disarmament obligations. They are also a smokescreen used to hide the repeated blocking of nuclear disarmament negotiations in this very body. The insistence on single-topic negotiation is inconsistent with historical facts and an attempt to ignore the contemporary global and regional strategic environment as well as its drivers.

This arbitrary obsession with the idea that the time is ripe for negotiation of such a treaty can hardly stand the test of any objective criteria. The 120-member Non-Aligned Movement has for decades insisted on nuclear disarmament negotiations as a global priority. The litmus test for those who propose discussing fissile material stocks during negotiations is to express their readiness to join a fissile material treaty that would conform to the majority and long-standing demand for nuclear disarmament.

Let me briefly touch on the drivers that heighten risks of a nuclear war by accident, miscalculation or perhaps even by choice. In the past twenty-five years, the global strategic landscape has undergone a major transformation, with ripple effects at regional levels as well. Apart from non-fulfilment of legal obligations to eliminate nuclear armaments, some have pursued policies of hegemony and domination. Many of the powerful States have undermined long-standing international rules and norms, including in the nuclear domain. These approaches have been accompanied by strategies to refine and modernize nuclear weaponry and the multiple means to deliver them. The development and deployment of ballistic missile defence systems has gathered pace. Outer space has been increasingly militarized. Not only has the number of conventional weapons grown but their sophistication has also reached new levels. There is a palpable integration between existing and emerging weapons through artificial intelligence capabilities.

The cumulative effects of these drivers do not remain confined to the global level. They have a direct impact and carry implications for regions, especially those mired in disputes and resulting tensions.

In view of this strategic environment and its drivers, the growing geopolitical competition and eroding trust and confidence, the Conference's agenda and its priorities require a fundamental rethink. The Conference can no longer afford to be held hostage to a single topic. It must revert to its *raison d'être* – it must be responsive to the pressing global and regional challenges and the rapid advancements in military technologies, platforms and tools. The Conference can no longer afford to dignify the lip service paid to a fissile material cut-off treaty by some with a view to masking the acquisition of fissile material and stockpiles not under safeguards. Neither can this body be convinced by the pretensions of those who enjoy a nuclear umbrella and extended deterrence, while lending legitimacy to a flawed treaty modelled entirely on non-proliferation measures.

It is in this larger context that the messianic zeal for banning the future production of fissile material alone has to be discarded – the earlier, the better. If such a treaty were in effect, it would in no manner limit the ability of a State possessing nuclear weapons to increase its nuclear arsenal, as has happened. Similarly, declarations of unilateral moratoriums of fissile material production are hardly a virtue, as their proponents claim. They are merely an indicator that such States have acquired fissile material far in excess of their legitimate defence needs. They are neither verifiable nor irreversible.

If all States supporting a so-called fissile material cut-off treaty are ready for such a moratorium, they should seriously consider transforming these declarations into a legal instrument to demonstrate their commitment to nuclear disarmament. As for stocks, two and a half decades ago, fudging enabled the Conference to adopt a mandate with the hope of genuine progress on nuclear disarmament. Subsequent discussions, however, made it plain that some States remained singularly fixated on ensuring that stocks are not covered under the treaty, so as to preserve their respective strategic advantages and perpetuation of the status quo. That explains their insistence on retaining a mandate that has far outlived its utility. The time for such ambiguity and fudging has passed. Past lessons and contemporary realities require our new mandate to include explicit and upfront treatment of fissile material stocks.

Pakistan is not opposed to a treaty on fissile material per se; rather, we are against a treaty that results only in a cut-off in the future production of fissile materials. Pakistan's consistent position on a fissile material treaty 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. As recognized by the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in the adoption of disarmament measures, the right of each State to security should be kept in mind, and at each stage of the disarmament process the objective should be undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces. Second, the treaty should contribute to the objectives of both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Third, in addition to a ban on future production, the treaty must cover the past production of fissile materials, in order to address the asymmetries in fissile material holdings at the regional and global levels. Fourth, the treaty should discriminate neither between the different 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 State. Fifth, the treaty should ensure that there are no loopholes by encompassing all types of fissile material usable in nuclear weapons, including their transfers. Sixth, the treaty should include a robust verification mechanism implemented by a representative and independent body under adequate oversight of States parties. Seventh, the treaty should promote both regional and global stability and enhance confidence among 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. Lastly, the treaty should be negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

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

In 2015, Pakistan submitted a working paper to the Conference which included a proposal for dealing with the existing stocks of fissile material. It offers a viable and comprehensive option. The practicality of our proposal posed a challenge to those who have a dogmatic opposition to the inclusion of existing stocks. Particularly discomfited are those who have stockpiled vast amounts of unsafeguarded fissile material under the garb of civilian uses. Such hedging is also done by those who have ostensibly announced ceilings for their nuclear arsenals but continue to hold hundreds of tons of fissile material far in excess of their self-declared needs.

Our proposal urges these States to, first, account for all their fissile material production, second, accurately characterize all their fissile material stocks and, third, preclude the possibility of their use in nuclear weapons by safeguarding them under a verification regime. Our proposal ensures that, in addition to a ban on future production, the existing fissile material stocks would not be used for manufacturing nuclear weapons. It also calls for mutual and balanced reduction of stocks on a regional or global basis to address existing asymmetries. Such a treaty would genuinely promote nuclear disarmament, arrest vertical proliferation and contribute to regional and global security and stability.

It is high time to realize that progress on fissile material can be achieved neither by changing the format or forum nor through creative drafting, fudging or imposition of so-

called solutions that ignore the views of major stakeholders. Real progress can be achieved only by addressing the security concerns of all States and by including stocks within the scope of the treaty. We also need to reconsider the negative effects on any future treaty's prospects generated by misguided policies based on discrimination and double standards driven by strategic and commercial considerations. The entire issue needs to be viewed in the broader security and strategic context.

Lastly, we have noted with concern that diversity of views and representation remains lacking in the panellists who are invited to the thematic discussions. While views shared by the panellists are useful and valuable from their vantage point, they were not necessarily sufficient. Other perspectives would have added further value and presented a broader picture on the relevant topics. We would therefore urge that in future, adequate geographical representation and diversity of perspectives are taken into account in the selection of panellists. Mr. President, I thank you.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan.

(spoke in French)

The next speaker is the representative of Switzerland, Mr. Masméjean.

Mr. Masméjean (Switzerland) *(spoke in French)*: Mr. President, we wish to convey our thanks to you for allowing us to address the subject of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. In our view, this is the most appropriate title for the subject that we are dealing with today, as it does not presuppose the form or scope of an instrument that has yet to be negotiated. The position of Switzerland on this issue has remained constant for many years. Such an instrument would be of great importance for international security, and we remain convinced of the need to open negotiations on it as soon as possible. We continue to believe that the mandate set out in document CD/1299 provides an appropriate basis for future negotiations. For the record, this document does not deal solely with the matter of such a treaty's scope. In particular, it states that an instrument must be non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable, thus providing an important basis for the negotiation of any future instrument.

The question of such an instrument's scope is, of course, a central issue on which views differ. For our part, we believe that any instrument should take into account both disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. In this context, we believe that it would be insufficient for an instrument to prohibit only the future production of fissile material; it should also regulate past production in some form. We believe that this issue of past production should be addressed during negotiations and should not prevent them from starting. Several types of measures could, in our opinion, be considered to address all or part of these stocks. We believe that weapons-grade fissile material produced for purposes other than weapons production should also be covered by such a treaty. In this area, too, measures could be considered that meet the needs of an exhaustive treaty while taking into account the sensitive aspects of the subject.

The work undertaken in recent years on an instrument that addresses the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons is significant. The work done by the various United Nations groups of experts and the discussions conducted in subsidiary body 2 of the Conference on Disarmament in 2018, which resulted in a report adopted by consensus, should be highlighted. We are grateful to the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his presentation this morning, and we can respond in the affirmative to his question as to whether this report should serve as a basis for our future work in the Conference on this topic. The efforts that have been made so far provide an excellent basis for launching more substantial work towards a legally binding instrument. Those efforts have also demonstrated that such a treaty is long overdue and that it would be possible for the negotiating parties to protect their legitimate national security interests during the negotiations. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement.

(spoke in English)

The next speaker on my list is the delegate of the Russian Federation.

Ms. Kuznetsova (Russia) (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening the thematic plenary meeting on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT).

We believe that there is a place in the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture for an agreement banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes or other nuclear explosive devices. Such an arrangement would serve as a multilateral measure to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

At the same time, we believe that the very idea of such a treaty is outdated. This issue is not a priority for our delegation within the field of work of the Conference on Disarmament. Moreover, there is a question about the advisability of concluding new agreements when the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was opened for signature nearly a quarter of a century ago, has not yet entered into force.

Nevertheless, if such an opportunity arises, we consider it important to focus the negotiation work on the draft text for a fissile material cut-off treaty at the Conference on Disarmament, which has the necessary expertise and brings together all States that produce weapons-grade fissile material.

Such negotiations must take place within the framework of a balanced programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament and on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. These are the parameters set out in action 15 of the 2010 Action Plan. With regard specifically to the parameters of a future FMCT, we assume that such a treaty should deal only with the future production of materials directly usable for weapons purposes.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for her statement. She was the last speaker on my list for our meeting today. Is there any other delegation that wishes to take the floor? I understand this is not the case.

Distinguished delegates, before concluding, I would like to thank our panellists and also all our colleagues who took the floor today in the thematic discussion on item 2 on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. We will continue our work tomorrow, Friday, 21 May, at 10 a.m. That meeting will also be the last plenary meeting under the Bulgarian presidency. Further information on the next plenary meeting will be communicated through the Conference secretariat in due course.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.