

# Conference on Disarmament

14 June 2012

English

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## Final record of the one thousand two hundred and sixty-second plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 14 June 2012, at 10.20 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Kari Kahiluoto..... (Finland)

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**The President:** I declare open the 1262nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As per the revised schedule of activities contained in document CD/WP.571/Rev.1, today's plenary meeting will be focusing on revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. Before beginning our substantive discussions on this topic, I would like to enquire whether any delegation wishes to raise any other issue first. That appears not to be the case. As was the case for the discussion on negative security assurances held last Tuesday, the day before yesterday, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) provided some background notes for which I am grateful and which I will now read out.

“On 24 September 2010, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, noting that moving forward on multilateral disarmament negotiations requires political courage, creativity, flexibility and leadership, convened and opened the high-level meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. The General Assembly held a follow-up meeting on the high-level meeting on 27 July 2011, which was chaired by the President of the General Assembly at that time, Mr. Joseph Deiss of Switzerland. In the Conference on Disarmament itself, the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, made a statement on 14 February this year drawing the attention of members to Mr. Ban Ki-moon's persistent calls for serious decisions to be taken with regard to the future of the Conference on Disarmament and made a number of specific suggestions for moving forward. Revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations has become an agenda item of the General Assembly. In General Assembly resolution A/66/66, adopted without dissent, the General Assembly urged the Conference on Disarmament to adopt and implement a programme of work to enable it to resume substantive work on its agenda early in its 2012 session. It also decided that during the sixty-seventh session it would review progress made in the implementation of the present resolution and, if necessary, further explore options for taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations.

In his summing up of the high-level meeting, the Secretary-General of the United Nations asked the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters to undertake a thorough review of the issues raised at the meeting, including the possible establishment of a high-level panel of eminent persons with a special focus on the functioning of the Conference on Disarmament.

In its report of 11 July 2011, the Advisory Board expressed differing views on such a panel as well as on its possible composition. Further steps towards setting up an eminent persons' panel have yet to be taken.

The rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament have not been substantively revised since the origin of the Conference after the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, except to reflect changes in membership and to give effect to a decision in 1990 on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament (CD/1036). As well as amending rules 7, 9 and 28 of the rules of procedure, that decision included a direction to the secretariat to simplify the programme of work, that is, to construct it as a schedule of activities giving indications of the weeks in which those activities would occur.

The improved and effective functioning of the Conference was last taken up in 2002 under a Special Coordinator, Ambassador Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, who

reported that his consultations had not led to a consensus. His report is referred to in document CD/PV.911, pages 14 to 19.

The issues on which the Special Coordinator Kariyawasam held consultations include the following: the application of the rule of consensus; the adoption of the agenda and the programme of work; the expansion of the Conference; the optimal use of mechanisms provided for in the rules of procedure, in particular in document CD/1036; the participation of non-governmental organizations; the tenure of the presidency; the role of the secretariat; the re-examination of the rules of procedure. These are only a few of the issues addressed. A complete list of issues can be found in the document referred to.

A final issue to touch upon in discussing revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament is its relationship with the General Assembly and the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In addition, the budget of the Conference is included in the regular United Nations budget. The Conference meets on United Nations premises, and is serviced by United Nations personnel; its Secretary-General is appointed directly by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and acts as his Personal Representative; its rules require it to take into account General Assembly resolutions on disarmament, although it is not obliged to act on them; it is required to send its reports to the United Nations, and it has become the practice for the Conference to transmit the texts of any treaties or arrangements made and prepared to the General Assembly to be formally adopted and then opened for signature, as was the case with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.”

This concludes my introductory statement provided by UNIDIR, for which I am grateful. This is a very important decision. I will not attempt as President to structure the debate, because I wish to leave delegations free as to the specific issues that they wish to address, and in which order, within the topic of revitalization. On this occasion, as I did for other topics, I would like to invite delegations to make the discussion as interactive as possible.

**Mr. Corr** (Ireland): Mr. President, my delegation would like to express its appreciation for the opportunity to address the issue of revitalization of this body. This is a critical issue which we need to urgently address. My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union. Since Ireland joined this body in 1999, not one single day of negotiation has taken place. All of us who participate in this Conference come with different expectations and priorities. For Ireland, our central policy goal is clear — to advance nuclear disarmament — and this Conference has not been able to move in this direction for over a decade. Many efforts to get the Conference back to work have been made, and I want to express appreciation for the summary by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

My delegation saw a brief glimmer of hope with the tabling of the draft decision contained in CD/1933, following intensive consultations by the Egyptian presidency. This was a courageous and imaginative effort to break the impasse on adoption of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. However, despite the flexibility and goodwill shown by many to meet the concerns expressed, in the main, by one delegation, agreement was not forthcoming.

The Ethiopian presidency presented a schedule of activities which has provided the basis for the discussions we are having today. My delegation welcomes the opportunity provided by this schedule. At the same time, these discussions cannot disguise the absolute, not partial, failure to date of this body to fulfil the mandate entrusted to us by the international community. It is not so much an issue that we in the Conference on

Disarmament should be doing something to justify the existence and the cost of the Conference, although that is certainly a factor. It is centrally about the value we place on multilateralism at a time when the structures of multilateralism need strengthening, if we are to move forward in tackling international issues beyond resolution except by acting in cooperation and by some give and take, which is usually, almost by definition, a *sine qua non* for progress in multilateral institutions.

Failure for over a decade is not a neutral fact. We cannot make progress in strengthening United Nations institutions or multilateralism generally if the main disarmament negotiation body is a byword for institutional and policy failure. Beyond that, disarmament must surely be a central pillar of all efforts to defuse international tensions and, on the other side of the coin, to strengthen international cooperation. And yet this Conference remains paralysed. This gives consolation to those who are not friends of multilateralism or of good endeavours in moving forward in tackling common challenges.

There is therefore a need for some intellectual honesty in all of us. My delegation, for one, regards it as an untenable proposition that the consensus rule is so rigid that we cannot even agree on a programme of work. In terms of the core issues — and for Ireland fissile materials is only one of four — it seems absurd that the great majority of the members of the Conference wish at least to consider what is possible in negotiations and yet cannot do so. If this applied to other United Nations institutions, the entire multilateral structures painfully put in place since 1945 would be severely weakened. The time and the place to say no is during negotiations, not in preventing discussion even starting.

The appointment of a special coordinator on expansion of membership makes eminent sense. There are many countries which applied for membership of this Conference decades ago. They are active in many other multilateral forums, including disarmament, and yet they are excluded from membership in this body. My delegation cannot understand why a multilateral body charged with negotiating disarmament instruments which benefits all States is not open to the full and equal participation of all States. The advancement of disarmament is not a privilege which should be only enjoyed by a select group, but a duty which all share.

In order to revitalize this body, Ireland strongly favours a number of steps. We should agree on the expansion of membership to any United Nations Member State wishing to join. We should strengthen ties to civil society. We should coolly look at our procedures, including the consensus rule. Obviously, we should agree on the implementation of the decision contained in CD/1864 or, failing that, CD/1933 or, failing that, a new agreed framework; but we cannot continue to do nothing.

Procedurally, one possible way forward would be to establish an open-ended working group charged with looking at the revitalization issues within a set time frame. A programme of work and how to implement it, and enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament are the two main issues.

If we fail to have a working Conference on Disarmament, then at some point soon enough will be enough, and the wider United Nations membership in the General Assembly will have to assume its responsibility to act. It is deeply damaging to the United Nations and to multilateralism for there to be no multilateral disarmament negotiation body addressing the range of critical disarmament issues.

This Conference has, for far too long, been unable to agree and implement a programme of work on what are described as the four core issues. My delegation, for that matter, does not exclude that the Conference could also do valuable work on other issues. What is clear is that we either do nothing or we can try to do something. My delegation strongly favours something. The alternative is extremely bleak for this body.

**Mr. Iliopoulos** (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine align themselves with this declaration.

We welcome the possibility of exchanging views on the issue of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament in the context of the approved schedule of activities. We strongly believe that a multilateral approach to security, disarmament and non-proliferation is the best means of maintaining international peace and security. We are a staunch supporter of the United Nations and of effective multilateralism.

The existence of new threats to international security makes it more important than ever to have a properly functioning system. Indeed, now is the time to reinforce and revitalize multilateral efforts, since we all recognize that today's global security problems require cooperative and multilateral solutions.

We remain deeply troubled by the ongoing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. In accordance with its mandate, the Conference has a crucial role to negotiate multilateral treaties. Its revitalization is more urgent than ever.

We heard the Secretary-General's urgent appeal on 24 January 2012 to all members of this Conference to support the immediate commencement of negotiations. We fully support and endorse this appeal. All members bear the responsibility of making the Conference on Disarmament deliver according to its mandate. It is indeed in our hands to restore the Conference to the central role it can play in strengthening the rule of law in the field of disarmament.

Indeed, last autumn the First Committee of the General Assembly heard once again the overwhelming calls for the commencement of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference should heed this call, and we would like to see effective follow-up to it. All European Union member States together with other United Nations Member States co-sponsored the resolution on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. We also noted with interest the suggestions of the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Tokayev.

We would like to reiterate our long-standing attachment to the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament. We underline the importance of the continuation of consultations on the expansion of the membership, as expressed in the operative paragraphs of General Assembly resolution A/66/59 on the report of the 2011 session of the Conference on Disarmament, and strongly support appointing a special coordinator on the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament membership.

We also strongly value the close and continuous coordination of the six presidencies, which could considerably contribute to our work. The joint effort to provide some useful order to the Conference's proceedings, which resulted in a schedule of activities going beyond the four-week term of a single presidency, is a welcome step in the right direction. Consistent with our engagement with civil society, we are also keen to explore ways to strengthen the voice of NGOs and to associate research institutions with the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Our commitment to the Conference on Disarmament has not diminished. At the same time, we are aware that the adoption of a programme of work will require sustained political effort. If the current standstill continues, the international community will

increasingly reflect on options and other ways to ensure progress in multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament.

We acknowledge the security concerns of all States, but at the same time we firmly believe that the consensus rule must not be subject to abuse. We therefore appeal to all delegations to the Conference on Disarmament to show the flexibility which is needed by all of us if we want to overcome the long-standing stalemate.

As we stated in our previous statements, for us the immediate commencement of substantive work through the adoption and implementation of a programme of work, building on the decision contained in CD/1864, is the highest priority. The Conference on Disarmament needs to resume its work without delay. We urgently need multilateral progress on the crucial issues that have been on our agenda for such a long time, and for the Conference to do what it was created to do.

**Mr. Strohal** (Austria): It is a pleasure to address the Conference and to thank you for having introduced me so nicely. Let me assure you of my full cooperation and thank you also for your introduction of these items. Allow me to add a few thoughts to the statement just made on behalf of the European Union, which my delegation of course endorses, because for us the revitalization of the United Nations Disarmament machinery is an issue of particular importance and it is also appropriate. My delegation is grateful for the opportunity available to address this issue here in the Conference. Moreover, listening carefully to your introduction, it seems to be the first time in 10 years that this has arisen, as odd as it may seem. Allow me also to express our appreciation to the presidents for the efforts they have already undertaken this year all aimed at breaking the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament. That includes an expression of appreciation to the Secretary-General for his questions and thoughts addressed to us at the beginning of this year's session.

In my delegation's view, there is no one-dimensional explanation for the continued failure of the Conference on Disarmament to live up to its mandate as a negotiating body. The problem has deep and complex roots; but, regrettably, we have been shying away for much too long from a thorough, honest and focused reflection on the root causes of this stalemate. It is high time to look seriously at the underlying political reasons and draw the necessary conclusions with regard to the future of this body and the future of multilateral disarmament negotiations.

Austria takes a clear stand that 15 years of paralysis of this body, which, as we all know, has been mandated to negotiate international disarmament treaties, is an unacceptable and inexcusable situation. Many delegations have been talking about the lack of political will to overcome the stalemate – or should I say lack of political courage, as you have just reminded us of the Secretary-General's remarks. We are convinced that, on the contrary, it is the political will of the international community at large to advance multilateral disarmament negotiations without further delay. Moreover, as I pointed out in my statement at the beginning of this year, the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly also clearly demonstrated that the impasse of the Conference on Disarmament has become unbearable for the international community.

It is not because of a lack of proposals; plenty of them have been put on the table by various stakeholders during recent years, including proposals that wait to feed into a comprehensive review of the working structures, methods and procedures of the Conference, if its members would only decide to do so. My delegation has consistently supported all these efforts. So let me just briefly recall its position on three key elements that a comprehensive reform of the Conference on Disarmament in procedural terms would need to tackle:

First, concerning rules of procedure, the consensus rule has continuously been misused in order to create procedural impediments to even starting substantive negotiations. The search for consensus is a valuable exercise, but it should of course be focused on the substance of disarmament negotiations. Procedural matters such as the programme of work should be put in the hands of the presidencies, to reflect a general view, but not necessarily a formal consensus.

The second important issue is the expansion of membership of the Conference. Disarmament is not and should not be the concern of an exclusive club of States. That may have been the case during the cold war. Security issues are now the responsibility of the entire international community. The arguments used against admitting new members are somehow the clearest sign that the Conference on Disarmament has not moved to the realities of the twenty-first century.

Thirdly, there is a lack of structured and sustained interaction of the Conference with civil society, with academia and with other stakeholders. The Conference as a whole and all delegations to it can only benefit from additional input, expertise and scrutiny by civil-society partners. Unfortunately, it seems that exactly these aspects are those that some members wish to keep out of the Conference. My delegation would of course welcome the appointment of a coordinator or a group of friends or a working group or whatever to make progress on these issues. There is, however, not much ground for optimism that this can lead to significant and timely progress.

Notwithstanding any efforts to reform this multilateral body, my delegation strongly believes that we have entered a stage when one concern ought to be prevailing over all others, and that is to commence without further delay the overdue substantive work on urgent issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly again demonstrated that this perspective is shared by an increasing number of delegations. It has repeatedly expressed its preoccupations in this regard, and so has the Secretary-General of the United Nations, including through the process of high-level meetings you recalled at the beginning of this discussion.

The delegations of Mexico, Norway and Austria made a serious attempt during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly to take multilateral disarmament negotiations forward. My delegation continues to pursue this issue and to explore all potential avenues that could further serve this goal. Austria believes in the potential of multilateralism in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. My delegation is committed to work with all interested partners in the firm belief that multilateral disarmament is more essential than ever, and possible.

**Mr. Gil Catalina** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, before beginning I would like to say that my delegation fully endorses the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

Etymologically, the word “revitalize” means to breathe new life into something. That presupposes that the thing in question, even if it is a living being only in the figurative sense, such as this Conference, was once alive and has since waned and is ailing. The reason we have come together today to speak of revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament is that we all agree that it is ill. It is less clear that we all want to cure it of its illness. We have been wasting our breath repeating the mantra that the Conference is the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. In the meantime, for the past three decades this unique forum has negotiated nothing.

That is precisely the problem plaguing the Conference: it negotiates nothing. We are all aware of it. So the treatment is very simple: start negotiating. There is no doubt about it. Yet instead of administering the medication that would cure the Conference of its ills, namely, starting negotiations, we insist on giving it a placebo. Embarking for the umpteenth

time on a discussion of the same old topics, as we have done this year, is nothing other than offering a placebo.

This stubborn insistence on giving the patient, the Conference, an ineffective remedy that offers no cure but that might keep it clinging to life just a bit longer makes me think that perhaps we do not want it to recover. Maybe we like seeing it limping and wheezing away. Obviously, if we continue like this another 15 years, one day or another we are going to lose the patient.

As for the origin of this “non-negotiation” disorder afflicting this forum, there are two schools of thought among the attending physicians. One blames the rules of procedure, which make it easy to block any beginning of negotiations. The other school blames a lack of political will: we do not negotiate simply because we do not wish to negotiate, and there is no more to it.

As all of us know, in reality both causes are at play. And let us not forget a third one: there is a lack of political will to change the rules of procedure.

In my opinion, political will is too broad a concept to be tackled by us here in this forum. On the other hand, I believe that if we truly and genuinely wish to revitalize the Conference, then we cannot simply discard the idea of reforming the rules of procedure.

Three things in the rules are, in my view, clearly dysfunctional: the system of presidencies (rule 9), the need to adopt a programme of work every year (rule 28) and the consensus rule (rule 18). I will devote today’s statement to the latter, as I believe it is one of the main causes of our paralysis. I reserve the right to speak to the other two questions, along with others, at the second meeting that we will hold on this topic.

Rule 18 of the rules of procedure establishes that the Conference shall conduct its work and adopt its decisions by consensus. Nothing else in these standards helps define “consensus” or gives any hint as to how it may be achieved in substance. Thus, we must conclude that in the Conference, consensus corresponds with the typical and general characteristics of this particular way of adopting decisions at any multilateral forum: a general agreement obtained through negotiation between the interested parties, and without a vote.

Seeking consensus is advantageous to multilateral negotiations. When a sensitive decision is to be made, it may sometimes be easier politically to remain silent than to vote. Seeking consensus avoids the emergence of dissenting minorities, limits the most extreme views and makes it possible to reach a global agreement, which is especially relevant for subjects such as those entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament.

The consensus rule has been immensely beneficial to this Conference throughout its history, as we can see from its first years of operation. We must bear in mind that in the 1980s too the Conference was criticized, but the criticism was levelled at the sluggish pace of negotiations, not at the complete absence thereof.

The problem is thus apparently not the use of the consensus rule but the fact that we have strayed — even irreversibly, I would say — from its basic spirit. In the words of the French legal expert Jean-François Guilhaudis, one of the few people who have studied this problem in any depth, this Conference does not operate according to the consensus rule. It applies an inflexible kind of rule of unanimity and actually grants, at least to some of its members, a right of veto. Let us not forget that the right of veto and paralysis go hand in hand, as we have seen so many times in the history of the United Nations Security Council.

This virtual right of veto has been wielded by a member of this Conference to conduct a deliberate policy of obstructing its work, while others regard this situation with some frustration, but without the slightest indignation or alarm. It is they who consider that



disarmament necessarily takes time and that all we have to do is wait for this manna — political will — to fall from heaven for our problems to be solved.

However, the term “political will” is ambiguous and nebulous. It fits far too easily into the rhetoric of the Conference. Attributing this forum’s paralysis to a lack of political will amounts to a dissipation of the States’ responsibilities (and there are many) into the vague conceptual cloud that shrouds this room.

We delegates taking part in the Conference cannot be catalysts for a political will that does not exist. However, can we manage to change the rules of procedure so that they are no longer an obstacle but a tool for negotiation?

I believe that to restore the dynamic of consensus lying at the basis of this body (which has been replaced by this inflexible concept of unanimity), all we really need to do is adopt the appropriate changes to bring consensus into relation with the use of voting, even if the latter is merely present as a backdrop.

Making provision for voting, even as an extreme option for non-substantive questions only, and exclusively after a sufficient number of attempts to arrive at a consensus, would foster a dynamic of negotiation, which in this forum has totally vanished. This would make any delegation encounter the possibility — even remote — of finding itself in a minority. The mere existence of this sword of Damocles would increase the possibilities for arriving at compromises.

With some minor changes, we can obtain some tangible results. But to do so we must be capable of cutting the Gordian knot of the consensus: the one in rule 47 of the rules of procedure that stipulates that any reform of the rules can take place only by consensus.

We thus have a paradox: the problem the Conference faces is not just a lack of political will, nor is it only the rules of procedure. The problem is the lack of political will to change the rules of procedure; rules that in turn preserve, magnify and even justify the lack of political will.

Will this political will to change the procedure some day surface? I would like to cite the three words with which Dumas closed his novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which admittedly are untranslatable into Spanish: “Wait and hope” Make yourselves comfortable; the wait is likely to be long.

**Ms. Anderson** (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, today’s meeting comes just when needed, at a time when once again we are encountering obstacles that are preventing the Conference on Disarmament from filling its appointed role as a forum for negotiation.

The Conference on Disarmament has not been able so far to fulfil its mandate. The vast majority of States represented here have the necessary political will to resume substantive work. We have shown that we were ready to find solutions and open the way for genuine progress in our support for the programme of work proposed by the Egyptian President. The same political will shows through in the General Assembly, which adopted resolution 66/66 on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Canada recognizes that there are no miracle solutions and that the situation cannot be resolved by simply deploring the ongoing deadlock.

One of the avenues that we should consider exploring is reform of the procedures. When they drafted the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament in the 1960s, the sponsors at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament were living and working in the midst of the cold war. While the global political context has changed considerably, the procedures of the Conference on Disarmament have not evolved accordingly. Admittedly, merely sorting out procedural issues would not solve all the

problems of the Conference, but it could help us to revive it so that it would be in a better position to meet current needs and create the necessary trust and political will to advance our common interest in building a safer and more secure world.

We believe that it is now high time to modernize the Conference on Disarmament and its rules.

*(spoke in English)*

Canada supports the proposal by the Secretary-General of the Conference for a special coordinator to be appointed to examine the rules of procedure although, like the delegation of Austria, we acknowledge that this is unlikely. The special coordinator could be charged with examining past and current practice in implementing the rules of procedure to determine if member States could make changes to facilitate the resumption of substantive work. The coordinator could also examine the need and scope for a full review of the rules of procedure.

One issue that the coordinator should examine is the rule of consensus. Use of the consensus rule in the Conference on Disarmament has increasingly drifted away from its original intent – to protect any State's national security interests. If we continue to apply consensus not only to substantive but also to procedural issues, this body will never function effectively. The coordinator should also examine past and current practice in agreeing to a programme of work. The programme of work is meant to support the substantive work of the Conference. Yet it is now used by some as a tool to prevent all meaningful work.

We should not forget that nothing in the rules of procedure precludes the Conference from working in the absence of an agreed programme of work. Indeed, the Conference has shown its ability to function well without one in the past. Why have we imposed this additional burden on ourselves? If we cannot return to the original intent of the rules of procedure, perhaps it is time to review the need for an annual programme of work. A rolling programme of work reviewed regularly might better serve our purposes.

We agree with the Secretary-General of the Conference that the rotating presidency limits our potential for work in depth. One month does not provide sufficient time for a president to conduct the necessary consultations, build the right bridges and provide direction to the Conference. We should consider if lengthening the president's term of office or changing how the president is chosen would benefit the Conference.

Besides the length of the president's term of office we must consider the office holder. Canada believes that the credibility of this organization is damaged when the office is held by representatives of States found by the Security Council to have failed to comply with their non-proliferation obligations. Institutions are not set in stone; they should adapt to modern realities, but the Conference on Disarmament has not done so. If we are not able to resolve the substantive issues that hold us back, a serious look at the procedural hindrances that contribute to this deadlock is warranted.

**Mr. Muhammad** (Malaysia): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor at this session, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the role of President of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish to assure you and the other presidents of our full cooperation and support in your endeavours to move the Conference forward.

Earlier this year, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia addressed this Conference and highlighted Malaysia's concerns about the stalemate in the Conference. Today the Conference on Disarmament has not reached an agreement on its programme of work, despite the efforts of the Egyptian presidency in introducing CD/1933/Rev.1, which, unfortunately, did not achieve the required consensus.

Despite that outcome, Malaysia stands ready to engage with all member States to move forward the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We all need to review the Conference's methods and our own attitude in order to ensure the relevance of the Conference as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.

My delegation believes that the topic of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament is an important one that warrants inclusion in the Conference's schedule of activities. If the Conference is to move forward, we need to resolve, politically, the current disarmament disputes that have entangled the Conference. We need to be honest and ask ourselves if our individual difficulties are really that important.

The Conference needs to explore all available avenues in taking the disarmament agenda forward. My delegation reiterates its support for the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which we feel is a practical way to move forward and revitalize the Conference on Disarmament. Attended by delegates at the highest level, the special session could be the impetus that we need to move the Conference on Disarmament forward. Perhaps we could also continue the high-level consultations that were started by the Secretary-General in 2010. Members of the Conference must be creative, innovative and able to accept new ideas in a dynamic and ever-changing global environment. It will also be necessary for us to take a closer look at the current methods of work with a view to assessing their effectiveness; to revitalize them; and, if necessary, to discard them or create new ones.

On this note, in order for the Conference on Disarmament to move forward, I wish to reiterate the suggestion made by Malaysia's Foreign Minister last February. First, all member States should demonstrate strong political will and the readiness to compromise and exercise utmost flexibility in order to start substantive work in the Conference. Second, the membership of the Conference should be expanded. This will ensure a greater engagement for members to play their part and collectively address the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation. Third, interaction with civil society should be increased in order to uphold the principle of openness, transparency and inclusiveness.

In this regard, we call upon members of the Conference on Disarmament to be faithful to the principle of non-discrimination and to promote the greater inclusiveness and openness of the forum. We believe that the singling out of certain parties or groups will not yield any positive outcome, and we hope that every effort will be made to accommodate the concern of all members. These efforts should focus on achieving consensus, based on the rules of procedure, so as to ensure its acceptance by all States.

In conclusion, let me assure you of my delegation's readiness to work with you and other members of the Conference with a view to achieving a positive and successful outcome for the session.

**Mr. Vallim Guerreiro (Brazil):** Mr. President, Brazil welcomes this opportunity to exchange views on the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. As we said before, we see merit in these thematic discussions, not least because they have been instructive as to why we have failed so far to agree on a substantive programme of work. Maybe if we get the diagnosis right we just might be able to apply a therapy which will move us closer to breaking the present deadlock.

What became clear in our recent debates is that when States want substantive negotiations to commence on a certain issue they do not mind lack of precision or clarity in the negotiating mandate, whereas when States do not want negotiations to commence on a certain issue they insist on having precision and clarity in the negotiating mandate, and are loath to leave any room for ambiguity, constructive or otherwise.

The arguments used to advocate action on one subject matter are the same as those used to prevent progress on a different subject matter. For instance, a few days ago the point was made that it would be erroneous to postpone the holding of the Conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East until the necessary conditions of stability in the region are met. While we fully agree with the point made, the fact is that the same argument — the lack of necessary conditions of stability — is advanced for not starting to seriously discuss and negotiate an international instrument banning nuclear weapons.

The efforts of the international community in the field of banning weapons and regulating the use of weapons have been focused on weapons of mass destruction and on weapons whose indiscriminate use entails unacceptable humanitarian consequences. The only weapons left out, which fit both categories, are the deadliest of all – nuclear weapons.

As has been pointed out often enough, a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) is an essential component of a nuclear weapons convention. Perhaps if we here at the Conference on Disarmament established a credible linkage between the two, we might get closer to an agreement on a programme of work which would make it clear that an FMCT will, with some degree of automaticity, lead to negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention. We do not have any concrete suggestion at this stage, but we think that the idea is worth exploring.

What appears clear to us at this stage is that the difficulties we are facing in this forum will not be surmounted elsewhere unless all important stakeholders are present. We understand the impatience that 15 years of inaction generates, but, at the same time, we owe it to ourselves to study carefully the potential shortcomings and pitfalls of moving disarmament negotiations anywhere else.

**Ms. Vuković** (Croatia): Mr. President, on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament, let me reiterate our full support for your work, midway through your presidency. We would like to thank you for the inclusive and transparent manner in which you conduct your presidency, as well as for your understanding of the continued interest in the enlargement of the Conference. As you stated in your opening statement, it is only in this forum and as a Conference on Disarmament member that a country has a permanent right to participate on an equal footing in negotiations on potential new instruments in the field of nuclear disarmament.

The topic of the day is revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, and we commend the six presidents and the membership for dedicating two plenary sessions to this issue. The question of the next enlargement is only a part of the larger revitalization puzzle. The informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament, composed of 38 States across all regions, shares strong common interest in this field. From our point of view, it is high time to look into the inner workings of the multilateral disarmament machinery at large and the Conference on Disarmament in particular, given its unique position and mandate.

We look forward to the critical assessment of the Conference on Disarmament to follow this autumn at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly in the First Committee, based on the relevant resolution on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations, adopted by consensus.

What we understand by the revitalization of the work of the Conference on Disarmament, first and foremost, is the start of fulfilling its mandate, in other words, the start of negotiations on legally binding arms control and disarmament instruments – and let me add and stress, where all interested States have the legitimate right to participate on an equal footing. As we heard from our fellow observer, the Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his address to the Conference during the high-level segment this year, we

consider that participation in negotiations on nuclear issues, space security, and a variety of related questions of universal impact should not be limited to only 65 countries. The Conference's agenda encompasses global concerns, and those concerns should be negotiated on a non-discriminatory, transparent and multilateral basis. We do not see any reason or moral justification why an interested State should not be allowed to participate fully and equally in the disarmament discussions and to contribute to their aims. Both the negotiations and the enlargement are subject to the consensus of the current membership. Needless to say, therefore, we are in a position of a double stalemate – a substantive and procedural one. Revitalization will not be complete or efficient without addressing both.

In this respect, our group would like to again reiterate its strong support for the concrete steps for consideration, as outlined in the remarks to the Conference made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Tokayev. As expressed before, we fully agree with his assessment that procedural and political advances go hand in hand, and moreover can be mutually reinforcing. Therefore, we would encourage the current membership to look into these issues — namely, the presidency's activity and structure, membership and the agenda — through the appointment of three thematic special coordinators, including one on the expansion of membership.

Thanks are due to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) for its invaluable contributions, including today. Let me remind you of the illustration given by the previous director of UNIDIR, Dr. Lewis, in order to vividly demonstrate the antiquity of the United Nations disarmament machinery – with the Conference on Disarmament as its main engine. Try to imagine a car that was manufactured in 1978 and maintained until 1996, with new parts last added in 1999, and has since then been left unused. This is a wreck we are in. The observer States, who like to label themselves as optimist States, stand ready to add new parts.

**Ms. Adamson** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, at the outset let me align my delegation with the statement delivered by Denmark on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

We are focusing today on possible ways to revitalize the disarmament machinery and in particular the Conference on Disarmament. It is well understood that the Conference has delivered important results in the past, but this prolonged stalemate has undermined confidence in the very body we have entrusted to negotiate arms control agreements.

This erosion of trust and confidence has seen important topics such as the ban on landmines taken outside of this forum, and other issues that should have been negotiated here have stalled, tangled in the rules of procedure that are supposed to exist to help us.

Any meaningful discussion of this sort must first of all consider why the disarmament architecture is currently failing us. The disarmament machinery as established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978 was envisioned as a joined-up process, one consisting of three separate but mutually complimentary bodies dealing with questions of disarmament and related international security issues.

At that first session it was decided that the United Nations Disarmament Commission should be a deliberative body, a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, the function of which should be to make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament and to follow up the relevant decisions and recommendations of the first special session devoted to disarmament. The Commission should, *inter alia*, consider the elements for a comprehensive programme for disarmament to be submitted to recommendations to the General Assembly and, through it, to the Committee on Disarmament, according to paragraph 118 (a) of the final document of the first session. That phrase outlines the relationship between the different bodies.

The Commission should deliberate and make recommendations through resolutions to the First Committee. They should be negotiated and then serve to direct the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament. However, over time the links have become broken. The Commission is unfocused; has two agenda items, nuclear and conventional weapons; and never considers the action required by resolutions passed in the First Committee, such as why they did not receive unanimous support, how best to change them, whether they are still relevant, and so on. That, in turn, sees the First Committee, aside from a couple of topical resolutions, voting on outdated and irrelevant resolutions, some of which have never changed in 30 years. The 15 or so resolutions that relate to the Conference on Disarmament are never aired in this Conference or considered even in an informal setting to see how to address the issues raised. Mr. President, you yourself touched on this in your opening intervention. Any serious attempt aimed at revitalizing the disarmament machinery would therefore need to take re-establishing the links between its various organs as a starting point. What follows is just one suggestion as to how we could go about this work.

In order to re-establish the links we could devote some time during the first session of the Conference to consideration of the resolutions directing it to work, as passed at the previous General Assembly. Ad hoc committees could be established to cover all seven agenda items, and the relevant resolutions could become the basis for discussions to find ways of moving forward on any item. The Conference could be used to deliberate the substance of the resolutions in an attempt to find common ground and cause to move towards negotiations. The ad hoc committees would have no mandates, and the programme of work would merely be a timetable outlining when those committees would sit. In addition, the chair of the Disarmament Commission and the chair of the First Committee could be invited to discuss the resolutions and relevance of those institutions.

Later in the year, the Commission could also be tasked with evaluating the resolutions passed by the First Committee and discuss their relevance in the current political and security climate. It could also examine all seven items from the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament and discuss the way forward and/or any different proposals which could fit under each heading. A report could be derived from this work, or States could work together to put resolutions forward to the First Committee.

In the First Committee, the traditional work would continue. It would negotiate and vote on the resolutions, including consideration of the work of the Conference, through its annual report, and the Commission. In this way, in time, the resolutions would become more relevant and focused as States begin to understand that these resolutions should build the agenda for the Conference on Disarmament. The links originally intended would be re-established. This would result in more focused discussions and, over time, negotiations would emerge.

Coming back to the here and now, we could also allow ourselves time, under each presidency, to brainstorm — a kind of open space, with no mandate and under Chatham House rules — so we can get away from our national positions and generally interact with each other, in the same way as we do over coffee. We are all friends and colleagues, but we get trapped behind national positions. This way we can have a real informal brainstorm on various topics inside and outside of this forum.

In conclusion, we are all aware that the main reason we are having this discussion today stems from the continued failure of the Conference to agree upon a programme of work to enable negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) to get under way. We have recently come very close. Many have shown flexibility and again demonstrated a common desire to get the Conference started again. However, the overriding problem remains one of political will, and this is what must be overcome if we are to achieve our long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We therefore again call on all members to seek to engage in a constructive manner with their colleagues across the various

groupings in an effort to find ways to build an understanding on the key issues and to make progress towards a verifiable and internationally acceptable FMCT.

**Ms. Rahamimoff-Honig** (Israel): Mr. President, as this is the first time our delegation is taking the floor during your presidency, please allow me to convey our appreciation for the way you are conducting our deliberations and assure you of our full support in the conduct of your duties.

This session's topic of revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament is clearly vital to this body at this stage. The vast majority of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament has long lamented the Conference's inability to reach an agreement on a programme of work which would enable it to move forward from the preliminary stage of deliberations to real negotiations. While our discussions have clearly been significant and valuable, they have not fulfilled the task which we have been mandated to carry out. We therefore welcome the inclusion of this topic in the schedule of activities.

In Israel's opinion, the problem which lies at the heart of the Conference's inability to move forward is the zero-sum game attitude which has been adopted by this body over the course of many years. Many here in this chamber view the four core issues as the only possible way forward, and therefore if no agreement is found pertaining to these deeply entangled issues, no progress will be made at all. This attitude limits this body's manoeuvring ability and perpetuates its paralysis.

We fully realize that it will not be easy for member States to overcome this "all or nothing" approach. We understand that there were logical reasons behind its formulation in the first place, as the global community widely defines the four core issues as those highest on the multilateral disarmament agenda. However, it is clear that the Conference is unable, at this point in time, to reach an agreement on these issues. The ongoing stalemate has lasted over a decade and a half. The complexities of the four core issues are such that movement forward has long escaped this body.

While it is clearly not our intention to belittle the importance of the four core issues, it should be recognized that the extent of the challenges and problems facing the world today is much wider both in the global arena and in the regional one. Many challenges face the world today, and addressing them would contribute significantly to regional and global peace and security. From Israel's perspective, these could be addressing the threat of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) or the lack of a comprehensive legal framework to ban transfers of conventional weapons to terrorists. We are confident that other Conference on Disarmament member States could similarly define issues with an impact on their own security that are not encapsulated by the four core issues.

In the light of the foregoing, Israel suggests that this body should consider, at the beginning of each working year of the Conference on Disarmament, during a predetermined time slot, whether an agreement can be reached on the four core issues. In our opinion, the time allotted for considering the possibility of reaching an agreement on the four core issues should not exceed two or three weeks or, at a maximum, one presidency. After the initial time period has elapsed, and with no prejudice to any agreement which might be reached at future sessions of the Conference, if no agreement is found regarding the four core issues, the Conference would turn its attention towards other issues of importance. This should not and would not preclude work on the four core issues, should an agreement materialize later in the working year. The Conference on Disarmament might similarly decide to extend the initial period of time allotted to the four core issues should prospects of success be deemed improved. If such an agreement materialized, the Conference on Disarmament would work in accordance with the agreement reached. If, however, no

agreement is reached, the Conference on Disarmament could turn its attention elsewhere. Such a proposal would improve the likelihood of real work beginning in the Conference.

It must be emphasized that Israel does not advocate any change in the rules of procedure. These rules, and in particular the rule of consensus, are the fundamental guarantee for member States that their vital national security concerns are carefully looked after. Therefore, even if the Conference on Disarmament decides to turn its attention to issues other than the four core issues, consensus would still need to be forged over what issue would be chosen. However, widening the scope of the possible issues to be taken up by the Conference on Disarmament would greatly improve its chances of conducting meaningful work and could improve the Conference's track record.

The Conference on Disarmament is an important institution as the single multilateral forum for negotiations. Great efforts should be made to revitalize its work and put it back on track.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, the Conference is currently engaged in an orderly and in-depth discussion of this year's agenda items and of how to revitalize its work. I would like to express the hope that the member States will cherish and maintain this positive momentum, reach consensus and work together to promote the adoption as soon as possible of a programme of work, and thereby revitalize the Conference.

The deadlock in the Conference results first and foremost from political factors. A favourable international and regional security environment is conducive to progress in multilateral disarmament. Disarmament and arms control efforts in turn help to enhance the common security of all States. It is our hope that every member of the Conference will demonstrate sufficient political will and work diligently on two fronts.

On the one hand, we must actively seek out a means of proceeding within the Conference. Through open, transparent consultations carried out on an equal footing appropriately addressing all parties' procedural and substantive concerns, we must seek out solutions acceptable to all. On the other hand, we must endeavour to establish favourable conditions outside the Conference. All parties should be encouraged to take positive steps to accommodate each other's mutual concerns and establish an atmosphere conducive to negotiation and dialogue.

China welcomes this exchange of views on the revitalization of the Conference. We believe that the discussion on this topic should embrace the following important principles:

First, during our deliberations we should show respect for the authority and stature of the Conference. As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum established in 1978 by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the Conference has authority and stature unmatched by those of any other international mechanism. Its membership includes developed and developing countries, nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, and important member States from different regions and groups. It has both the potential for effective action and broad representation.

The Conference has sound institutional safeguards. Lying at the core of the rules of procedure, the principle of consensus exemplifies the egalitarian spirit of the Conference, providing effective safeguards and guarantees that the security concerns of each member State will be amply addressed. This is the hallmark of the Conference as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiation mechanism, and we must make a special effort to preserve it.

Second, the discussion should uphold the firm confidence shown in the Conference. The Conference and its predecessors have in the past made outstanding contributions to international peace and security, concluding numerous treaties that serve as the backbone of



the multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation regime, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We all are aware that in the negotiation of major arms control agreements, we cannot expect success overnight. It took many years to prepare and negotiate the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Such important issues as nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States continue to be discussed ever since their inclusion on the Conference's agenda.

The more the Conference's member States have to face deadlocks and difficulties, the more they must maintain their confidence in and patience with the Conference, strengthen cooperation, confront challenges and promote the Conference's continuous advance towards its member States' common goal.

Third, the discussion should devote due attention to the legitimate security concerns of all States. Looking back, we see that a critical step in the past successes of the Conference has been to fully respect and appropriately address the legitimate security concerns of each member State. That is the purpose of serious and conscientious multilateral arms control treaty negotiations, and it is also an important precondition for ensuring that all stakeholders take part, that the instrument in question is fair and authoritative, and that it is able to reflect the common will of the international community, as represented by all member States.

Fourth, the discussion should make a positive contribution to revitalizing the Conference. We are all extremely concerned about the present state of affairs in the Conference, and we all hope to be able to revitalize the work of the Conference as quickly as possible. In recent years, the successive presidents of the Conference, member States and Secretary-General Tokayev have all put forward a number of good suggestions and ideas on how to further increase the Conference's effectiveness and breathe new life into it.

China fully understands the desire expressed by all parties to improve effectiveness so as to move ahead the work of the Conference. We are willing to discuss with other parties appropriate suggestions for how to do so. We should integrate new developments, further engage in creative thinking, and unceasingly make new efforts and try new endeavours. We should broadly develop all types of consultations and strive to devise a plan for the revitalization of the Conference that is acceptable to all.

**Mr. Wollenmann** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation is especially pleased to see that the issue of revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament is included on the agenda. Revitalizing the Conference, the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, is a priority issue requiring thorough, focused, realistic and, especially, honest discussion. Overcoming the lack of progress and the reasons for the deadlock in the Conference remains a central challenge for the Conference.

It should be emphasized that this topic comes under a mandate of the General Assembly of the United Nations. In particular, the Conference has a duty to follow up on resolution 66/66, adopted without a vote by the General Assembly, which was introduced by the Netherlands, South Africa and Switzerland and which has already been referred to several times this morning.

The General Assembly conveyed its growing impatience over the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. Resolution 66/66 emphasized the need for strengthened political will, a fundamental element for launching negotiations. The members of the Conference must realize that we are living in a globalized and interdependent world that is facing, as a community, a number of challenges as regards disarmament and non-

proliferation. They should commit to increasing their efforts to create a political climate conducive to beginning multilateral negotiations in the Conference.

Mr. President, resolution 66/66 also sets out very practical outcomes for members of the Conference. In one paragraph, it invites States, in the appropriate forums, to explore, consider and consolidate options, proposals and elements for revitalization of the United Nations disarmament machinery as a whole, including the Conference on Disarmament. If any body fits the description of an appropriate forum, it is the Conference on Disarmament.

Carrying out such an exercise is important and necessary. The current stalemate cannot be attributed solely to external political factors and the lack of political will. The forum also remains paralysed because of serious institutional shortcomings, which must be assessed. Members of the Conference on Disarmament should give further thought to the organization and working methods of the Conference, and do so systematically. Many proposals have already been made, including by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev. If such a process of deliberation were to show that there is a common denominator that would make the Conference more effective, then we should not hesitate to effect the changes needed to make the Conference more functional. We are convinced that such an exercise should be conducted through a process of systematic institutional assessment, which could be carried out, for example, by a special rapporteur appointed for that purpose or in the framework of a working group, as has been proposed several times this morning. Let me share with you a few points that would be worth considering:

- The consensus rule remains an excellent principle for achieving agreements that enjoy the broadest possible support. But the way in which this rule has been interpreted has given rise to a situation where no agreement can be reached. The broad interpretation of the consensus rule is responsible for the fact that the Conference on Disarmament maintains the status quo and favours the interests of a minority to the detriment of the interests of the vast majority of its members. The issue of how this rule is interpreted cannot be dodged much longer;
- The way in which the programme of work is adopted and interpreted stands in the way of concrete work;
- The system of rotating the presidency every four weeks prevents the president from playing a significant role in the Conference on Disarmament;
- The rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament exclude various players who are essential partners if we wish to create a climate of global security in the twenty-first century. We are convinced of the need to work more openly, taking an inclusive approach that allows the views of all the relevant players — other interested States, expert communities and members of civil society — to be taken into account.

We hope that these few lines of thought may be explored again this year. The General Assembly is planning to review, at its sixty-seventh session, the progress made in the implementation of resolution 66/66. We believe that the report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly should take into account our discussions on the issue of revitalizing the work of the Conference so that we may take stock of the progress made and further explore the available options for moving forward multilateral negotiations on disarmament. We believe that the rule that reports should be adopted by consensus means that the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly should accurately reflect the positions of all States members of the Conference.

Mr. President, we are convinced that the existence of a standing group of ambassadors and experts on disarmament plays an essential part in negotiating and implementing disarmament measures effectively. We also believe that a standing forum is

needed to meet the challenges of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Conference on Disarmament can and must be that forum, because of its unique potential. For this to happen, however, it must do some soul-searching and evolve. That is why Switzerland hopes that the Conference will be able to begin a process that will lead to a thorough assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and enable it in the end to become functional again and meet the expectations and hopes of the entire international community.

**Ms. Padilla Rodríguez (Mexico)** (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the six presidents' willingness to include the theme of revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament in the work of the plenary sessions. As we have previously stated, we regret that this kind of discussion is taking place instead of the implementation of a programme of work.

We are constantly reminded that a large number of delegations consider that there has been no paralysis plaguing the Conference for the past 16 years. It is interesting to hear delegations from different regions explain that the lack of substantive work in this Conference is due to outside causes. In their opinion, the Conference is merely a victim of a confluence of international forces that are not conducive to its work. As we all know, Mexico does not subscribe to such points of view. If that were truly the situation, it would be paradoxical to address ways of revitalizing the Conference. We cannot revitalize something that is already alive. And today we are discussing that very paradox.

The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978 expressed alarm about the threat that the very existence of nuclear weapons imposed on the survival of humankind. All States Members of the United Nations expressed the conviction that disarmament, and especially nuclear disarmament and arms control, were essential for achieving international peace and security and for the economic and social advancement of all peoples. This warning is still resonating. We must move ahead in this endeavour.

The General Assembly in 1978 recognized the desirability of assigning different roles to the various disarmament forums. Those roles were reflected in the different mandates conferred on the one hand on the United Nations Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body, and on the other hand on the Conference on Disarmament as a permanent negotiating forum. The disarmament machinery was conceived as a tool or a vehicle with which to arrive at a destination.

Nonetheless, despite the constant work carried out in the past 16 years by the machinery, including our own forum, the mechanism, and the Conference in particular, has been fulfilling neither its purpose nor its mandate.

In straightforward and simple terms, the only way for the Conference to be revitalized would be for it to fulfil its mandate, which means adopting and implementing its programme of work and negotiating multilateral disarmament agreements.

The current deadlock is not the only one to affect the Conference, much less multilateral forums in general. Nonetheless, the Conference in May 2009 adopted its programme of work for the first time in a decade without being able to act on it thereafter, and it has since been incapable of adopting a new programme of work. This shows that there is a need to call into question, with contemplation and an open mind, whether the Conference is a forum that is effectively responsive to the interests of all, and not just some, of its members, and whether as an institution it is fit to respond to the realities of the twenty-first century.

Such contemplation must include a good look at the characteristics of this forum, which was established in another age, with the aim of striking a delicate balance in a bipolar world marked by an international balance of power that was very different from the one we now have. In this century, multilateral negotiations cannot give short shrift to the current multipolar structure, in which not just States but non-governmental bodies take part,

even for decision-making on global security issues. Thus, it would be more coherent to speak of the reform and renewal of the Conference rather than of its revitalization.

Mexico has on numerous occasions drawn attention to the need to analyse the Conference's methods of work. Permit me to set out in greater detail our arguments in support of such an approach.

International relations have an influence on the stances and actions of States in international organizations. Such organizations do not exist in a vacuum. However, international organizations do not have lives of their own or free will. They cannot adjust or change on their own as if they were independent of their member States' decisions, often referred to as "political will".

International relations are complex. That is precisely why international organizations exist. Those of us who believe in multilateralism consider that the international organizations must foster processes in which the States can make the right decisions to achieve agreements and solve common problems. We believe that forums can have the merit of promoting such political will. Sometimes the methods of work block the decision-making process. In such cases, the bodies undertake reforms, or else they perish. Geneva is home to many organizations that are undergoing reforms without the least bit of hype, the only aim being quite simply to improve their work for the benefit of their members.

But that is not the case in the Conference. Its rules of procedure, which in the past maintained a balance, now hardly make sense. The monthly rotation of the presidency, the existence of regional groups, the adoption and implementation process for the programme of work, the absence of civil society in the discussions and the application of the consensus rule have all eroded the Conference's usefulness and serve as a deterrent to the emergence of political will.

While the Conference has remained in the doldrums, some important disarmament negotiations have taken place. These include the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the forthcoming negotiation of an arms trade treaty and above all the conventions addressing the problems of anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, respectively, which have been concluded outside the framework of the Conference and reflect the interest of the international community in forging multilateral disarmament agreements.

We must achieve the complete elimination of nuclear weapons through multilateral agreements. Mexico will unceasingly draw attention to the disastrous humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapon, which would constitute a crime against humanity. We must begin nuclear disarmament negotiations as a matter of urgency. If we cannot do so in the Conference, we should do so in other bodies.

**Mr. Rosocha** (Slovakia): Mr. President, Slovakia fully associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. Nevertheless, I would like to add a few comments from a national perspective.

My delegation welcomes the opportunity to exchange views on the issue of revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, which comes at a crucial moment. We would like to commend you and the other presidents for giving us this opportunity to assess the current state of play and future perspectives for this forum. Let me also express our deep gratitude to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for its most valuable contributions to our debate on various topics in recent meetings. We appreciate its input and hope that such cooperation will continue in the future.

We share the frustration and dissatisfaction of many delegations with the current state of affairs in the Conference on Disarmament. It has serious consequences for the

Conference in terms of its credibility and relevance to address our ever-growing list of security challenges and needs.

We believe that the time has come to revitalize and reinforce multilateral efforts, as today's security challenges require common and united global solutions. It is from this perspective that the effective multilateral disarmament machinery, of which the Conference is a key element, is vital for our security. The Conference has for a long time been valued and recognized as a multilateral channel for strengthening international security.

We understand that patience is needed, but we believe that, after more than 15 years of stalemate, action is more than indispensable. The Conference has the responsibility to conduct multilateral disarmament negotiations, and its member States bear the responsibility for living up to the mandate given to them by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978.

As my delegation already said in its previous statements, Slovakia traditionally places the principle of multilateralism at the centre of the international community's endeavour in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

We continue to see the Conference on Disarmament as a single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament matters. We believe that it is so important that we cannot afford to have its further inactivity and its deadlock continue. We are convinced that the Conference is still the best place to produce global, well-founded and viable instruments. The Conference on Disarmament concept offers the potential to find negotiated solutions.

At the same time, the Conference needs to offer perspectives and serve its purpose. If not, the perspectives may be created elsewhere. Indeed, we cannot and do not want to change the purpose, but we can search our toolbox and check whether we have the right tool at hand. We cannot overlook aspirations to open other disarmament avenues and to take multilateral disarmament negotiations forward. In the critical mass, which would include essentials, alternative ways and means might be explored.

Slovakia welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convene a high-level meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking multilateral disarmament negotiations forward. It also supported and actively participated in the General Assembly plenary debate last year on the high-level meeting follow-up with a view that the General Assembly might provide a suitable forum to address a pressing issue on disarmament machinery, if the Conference remains in a deadlock.

Mr. Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, told us in 2003 that revitalizing the Conference required, first and foremost, renewed political will and determination among its member States. After almost 10 years, we still struggle with this call. Because of the deadlock, the international community is prevented from advancing on issues, in or through this Conference, which it believes would strengthen security for all. That is why the stalemate is intolerable in security terms. The continued impasse is unsustainable. The Conference member States bear a special responsibility and must not add to preserving the status quo. As the Conference's role as a vehicle on the way towards nuclear disarmament is in question, we must clearly address how it can regain its function and confirm its potential in meeting the expectation of the wider international community.

My delegation recognizes that the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament decided that the Conference on Disarmament would conduct its work by consensus. We understand that a consensus rule has been established in order to provide that a decision taken in the Conference adequately reflects the security interests of the

member States. In this regard, we believe that a consensus on outcomes of negotiations would create a mechanism that would offer enough power to defend such security interests.

It is only natural that security interests can best be defended during the negotiations. This is an appropriate place and time where the consensus should be sought. Regrettably, it seems that the consensus rule is being misinterpreted and misused in the Conference on Disarmament. In this regard, it would be in the interests of the Conference if the application of this rule were reviewed. The consensus rule should not be used to create procedural hurdles.

We understand that there are different priorities for the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, but the fact that the Conference is in a stalemate, not due to its failure in negotiations but due to its inability to agree on the programme of work on which negotiations should proceed, is a matter of serious concern.

According to the rules of procedure, the Conference may establish subsidiary bodies whenever it deems it advisable for the effective performance of its functions, including when it appears that there is a basis to negotiate a draft treaty or other draft texts. In this regard, if the Conference decides to set up such a body, it does not have to link a decision on its mandate to a decision on its establishment. At the same time, we also understand that the Conference on Disarmament is not compelled to establish subsidiary bodies and that the rules of procedure do not prevent the Conference from conducting the negotiations without them.

We share the view of the Secretary-General of the Conference that concrete steps to improve the functioning of the Conference would be politically significant as a demonstration of the collective will of the members of the Conference on Disarmament to find a way out of the impasse, and might help to build trust. In this regard, we agree that there is potential for a more active role for the presidents. We welcome a demonstration of this potential by presidents in this year's session. Enhanced cooperation among the presidents could bring longer-term perspectives which would be pursued beyond a single presidency. We believe that such an approach could create a new dynamism in the Conference.

My delegation has also noted a desire and interest in the Conference on Disarmament membership expressed by many countries. We believe that this issue deserves proper consideration. In this regard, Slovakia welcomes the increasing support for appointing a special coordinator on the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament membership. At the same time, we are of the view that any procedural reform cannot serve as a substitute for the pursuit of negotiations on new disarmament instruments. Nevertheless, positive consideration of certain procedural arrangements might bring benefits and facilitate the work of the Conference on Disarmament in the future.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm the readiness of my delegation to work with all partners with a view to bringing the current deadlock to an end and taking multilateral disarmament negotiations forward.

**Mr. van Donkersgoed** (Netherlands): Mr. President, given the importance that the Netherlands attaches to the issue on the agenda today, Ambassador van den IJssel would have preferred to be here in person. Unfortunately a commitment outside Geneva, indeed outside the country, has prevented him from attending today's plenary, so please accept our apologies for his absence. With your permission, I would now like to pass the floor to my colleague Ms. Verberne-Schreuder to deliver my delegation's statement.

**Ms. Verberne-Schreuder** (Netherlands): Mr. President, we are grateful for this opportunity to share our thoughts on the important topic of the revitalization of the

Conference on Disarmament. We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of the European Union.

The effective functioning of multilateral disarmament institutions is vital to our collective security. Last year's session of the General Assembly demonstrated the growing concern of many delegations about the state of the multilateral disarmament machinery, and the Conference on Disarmament in particular. General Assembly resolution 66/66, which the Netherlands tabled together with South Africa and Switzerland and which was adopted by consensus, speaks in its operative paragraph 7 about the need to take stock, during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, of all relevant efforts to take forward multilateral disarmament negotiations.

In our view the session today, and the session on 21 August, should aim to do exactly that – to take stock. What efforts have we undertaken? Are we closer to the start of multilateral disarmament negotiations now than we were during the First Committee last year? I am afraid that the answer to that question can — regardless of where one stands on many of the questions discussed here — only be negative. We are not closer, but perhaps even further away from starting negotiations than in October of last year.

General Assembly resolution 66/66 also clearly states that the General Assembly is ready to further explore options for taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations, if the Conference on Disarmament is again unable to adopt and implement a programme of work this year that will lead to substantive work. If we are honest with each other, with our Governments and with ourselves, the chances of achieving a breakthrough on the programme of work are slim.

The Netherlands remains ready to discuss all options inside but also outside the Conference on Disarmament. As my delegation has stated before, simply accepting the status quo and waiting for political will to emerge may seem a comfortable position for some and an argument against considering alternatives, but in the end doing nothing will erode this body even further and make it fade — further — into irrelevance. Mothballing, a word sometimes used in these discussions, will not be the result of a deliberate choice, but may be the consequence of the continued lack of meaningful activity in this body. The Conference on Disarmament will formally still exist, but it will fade away. That is not a happy prospect.

At the same time, we also have to be realistic about the options available to us. In our view, any meaningful process in the area of nuclear disarmament needs to have a critical mass of countries that participate, and preferably to have most, if not all, nuclear-weapons States on board. If launching negotiations is not viable in the short term, we should at least look at possibilities for preparing the ground for future negotiations inside or outside the Conference on Disarmament. For the Netherlands, organizing thematic debates in the Conference is not enough. Exchanging well-known positions in a static format will not bring us closer and is insufficient groundwork for negotiations. We need more focused, interactive, and sustained debate to achieve this goal, preferably in the Conference on Disarmament, but not necessarily. These activities should offer a real perspective for negotiations. The Netherlands believes that bringing together experts on a specific topic can be instrumental in this context.

The Netherlands is also open to examining the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament, including its procedures and operational principles that put heavy constraints on this body. We recognize the important contribution of the Secretary-General of the Conference to this debate. We regret the fact that the Conference has been unable to agree on the issue of wider participation and to enhance engagement with civil society. The absence of any substantive and interactive discussion on even these important topics illustrates the state of paralysis that the Conference is in.

The Netherlands looks forward to a continued debate on the crucial topic of revitalization, both in this forum and in the General Assembly. We hope that this debate will take place in a transparent and inclusive manner and in an outcome-oriented spirit.

**Mr. Lindell** (Sweden): Mr. President, Sweden fully subscribes to the statement of the European Union.

In taking the floor on a national basis, let me begin by saying that we are very pleased indeed to see a representative of a fellow Nordic country in the President's chair and we also wish to commend you on the excellent way in which you are conducting these proceedings.

The Conference is now well into a series of thematic discussions. Like many others, my delegation had somewhat mixed feelings towards these discussions, as we believe that they should not be allowed to become a substitute for real work and should not be perceived or presented as such. This is not at all to say that our discussions so far have been without value, but rather that we should remember that we are doing this instead of negotiating, as a result of the Conference's failure to adopt a programme of work.

We thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for his statements on the matter of revitalization, including on 14 February this year. One of the points made by the Secretary-General concerned the presidency's activity and structure. He called for an active role for the six presidencies, including collective proposals and initiatives on behalf of a number of consecutive presidencies. This, we believe, is an excellent proposal. The schedule of activities, which was agreed on this spring, covering the rest of this year's session, is a good example of the value of such an approach.

The Secretary-General also noted that ultimately the length of each presidency should be extended, and the method of selection of the presidency ought to be modified. We strongly agree on both points. There is an obvious need to create greater continuity in our work. The sooner such changes are made, the better. In addition, we believe that any programme of work should have a lifespan of more than one session. It should remain valid until it is replaced by a new programme.

Another important aspect is the Conference's membership. The Secretary-General argued in favour of a broader membership in the interest of making the Conference more representative and to increase its legitimacy. We agree on this point too. We also wish to echo the calls made for openness and inclusiveness.

We have heard proposals about widening the substantive scope of the Conference to cover new issues. On this point, we are somewhat less convinced. Several important gatherings and forums of the international community have expressed what the issues of priority should be. Tasks have been given to the Conference on Disarmament, which cannot be overlooked. Our objective is not to negotiate on just anything; it is to negotiate on certain defined issues.

Concerning rules of procedure, we are sympathetic to the notion of a model according to which procedural issues are not subject to consensus decision-making.

Another proposal is to consider merging the Conference and the United Nations Disarmament Commission into a new body with both a deliberative and a negotiating mandate. It is difficult not to conclude that such a body would tend to be deliberating rather than negotiating. This would, therefore, not be the way forward that we would primarily advocate.

By way of conclusion, procedural reforms would hardly, in and of themselves, be enough to ensure that the Conference will again function as a negotiating body. However, if such reforms are far-reaching enough, we believe that they could at least improve the



chances of this Conference making its long-awaited return to substantial work. Given that the frustration with the status quo is steadily mounting, we need to move forward without delay.

**Mr. Valencia Muñoz** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, first I would like to congratulate you on the way in which you have led the work of the Conference during this past month. We appreciate the proposal to bring the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) into this deliberation process, and we regret that owing to procedural uncertainties we have not been able to see more active and substantial participation by that institute. We encourage successive presidents to address the considerations raised by certain countries with a view to opening the way for the valuable participation and contribution in our discussions not only of UNIDIR but also of other international and non-governmental organizations that can doubtless broaden our knowledge and refresh our points of view on the various items on our agenda.

Relating to the question we are now discussing, that of revitalizing the Conference, we consider that, as we said earlier, we already have a broad diagnosis of the state of the Conference. During its presidency Colombia tried to compile them in document CD/1933. We would thus like to emphasize that the time to act is now. The delegation of Colombia would like to share a few thoughts and reiterate a couple of ideas that, from our point of view, would make it possible to make this body stronger and end the deadlock and torpor that now afflict it.

First, clearly the only way to revitalize the Conference is by starting substantive work, that is, by commencing negotiations on the subjects on our agenda. Any activity outside of this mandate, or that does not pave the way for negotiations, is thus superfluous. What is more, it may produce a false impression of progress, an illusion detrimental to the very legitimacy of the Conference. We ourselves are the only ones responsible for the present and future situation of the Conference.

Second, the discussion on the agenda items that we began in May with the adoption of document WP/571/Rev.1 should add value to the work of the Conference. Such activities would be devoid of sense if they were limited to a repetition of national positions. As we noted in the first round, there were no substantive changes in the interventions and positions of the States, with the exception of a few new points which, we note, included some thoughts on the disastrous humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

Colombia considers that the usefulness of such exchanges lies in finding, after each discussion, lowest common denominators on the basis of which to begin drawing up the mandates we wish to pursue on each topic. The exercise in summing up and ascertaining such a basis could be the duty of the presidency itself or could be carried out in informal meetings. One of the advantages of this formula is that the responsibility for seeking consensus on the mandates is shared by all member States and is not shifted onto the rotating presidency, whose capacities are limited.

Third, regardless of the formula selected, Colombia would like to emphasize two ideas relating to the subject of mandates. We consider that the Conference has the ability to move ahead in more than one subject at a time. In other words, we can work simultaneously on two negotiating mandates on the subjects that are apparently most advanced, and where a consensus is very near, for example, for negotiations on a fissile material treaty and a convention on negative security assurances.

We would further like to reiterate that the mandates must not be linked. Progress on one agenda item must not be subject to the pitfalls blocking progress on the others. Linking them amounts to a defective interpretation of the principle of balance.

Fourth, as a secondary and supplementary action, we could consider formulas that would directly address how to strengthen the Conference. Such discussions should also take into account procedural questions. We are aware of the reluctance in this body to address the subject of the rules of procedure, but from our perspective the constant overinterpretation of the rules is one of the factors slowing our progress. The methods of work of any body, including its rules of procedure, are essential to its dynamism and effectiveness.

We would like in this connection to refer to two initiatives that were discussed last year and that we consider still topical and useful, in the hope of finding the right political moment for their implementation. They are the ideas of establishing a working group on revitalizing the Conference and of naming a coordinator on the expansion of the Conference's membership so as to make it possible to take decisions to initiate concrete work.

We hope these considerations will be taken into account and will help in the decision-making so that the discussion of revitalizing the Conference can stop being an exercise in rhetoric. We are confident that as the Conference is strengthened and sets to work, the entire multilateral disarmament machinery, which presents symptoms similar to those in this body, will be rejuvenated. For now, the tools at our disposal are not up to the task of our aim of securing a safer world.

**Mr. Simon-Michel** (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, France fully supports the statement just made on behalf of the European Union. I would now like to make a few comments in my national capacity.

France is committed to effective multilateral disarmament that helps to foster a safer world by moving steadily towards general and complete disarmament.

All the institutions that make up the disarmament machinery, namely the Conference on Disarmament — the sole multilateral forum for the negotiation of legally binding agreements — the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations, must contribute towards this long-term objective. However, we are all aware of the stalemate in which the Conference on Disarmament has been locked for the past 16 years. This is not a healthy situation, and we share the frustration expressed by nearly all the delegations present over the time lost in idle disputes and wasted resources.

The cause of this stalemate is primarily political. A “consensus minus one” exists to launch negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Of course we would like these negotiations to be conducted in the Conference on Disarmament, which has been set up for that purpose. For us, the time is ripe for a draft agreement on the subject that would make a genuine contribution to collective security.

However, we must allow ourselves to think about how best to run our forum, and I am grateful to the Secretary-General of the Conference for the ideas that he put forward to us on 14 February for consideration.

First of all, the consensus rule is worth keeping, although it has been misapplied.

The consensus rule is a guarantee for all the players concerned that they may take part in disarmament negotiations and trust that their legitimate security interests will be observed. It also ensures that the negotiated agreements will be enforced by all those who have adopted them. For France, the consensus rule is therefore a requirement for effective multilateralism.

Over the years, however, the consensus rule at the Conference on Disarmament has come to be misused as a means of obstruction. Consensus on a decision should be reached

simply through the absence of explicit opposition, thus allowing work to move forward. Consensus is also a frame of mind that entails efforts by each of the parties to achieve mutual concessions. Unfortunately, consensus at the Conference has in practice come to be defined as unanimity, which is a much more definite and narrow notion. A unanimity rule is applied, moreover, to all decisions, regardless of whether they are substantial or procedural in nature, and, indeed, regardless of the importance of the issue.

The president's role is also worth considering. There is no body that works effectively by consensus without a presiding officer capable of bringing forward proposals in order to sum up positions and to help reach compromises.

If we look at our history and at the sadly all-too-distant period when the Conference effectively negotiated major treaties, we see that this role fell above all to the presiding officers of the working groups. That is why the Conference, in plenary form, was able to operate without much difficulty with a monthly rotating presidency.

But now we work only in plenary meetings. Admittedly, informal cooperation among the six presidents for the year is excellent, and that is something positive. I pay tribute here to the efforts and goodwill of the four colleagues who have already held the presidency this year in a collegial and constructive spirit. But it seems difficult for a president of the Conference on Disarmament, in the space of a single month, to give impetus to the forum, and this system quickly shows its limits.

In addition, the prerogatives of the president of the Conference have been reduced over the years by an increasingly narrow interpretation of the rules of procedure.

It is clear that certain procedural matters are of great importance, in particular the establishment of working groups. If the programme of work is sensitive, it is because its purpose is to establish working groups, so that it can lead to the launch of negotiations or even guide those negotiations to a certain degree under a mandate. I gladly concede this point.

But when it comes to simply holding thematic discussions in plenary under the agenda adopted at the beginning of the year, when we actually have an agenda, is it reasonable to have the same formalities and seek the formal agreement of the Conference? In a similar vein, when it comes to calling on outside experts and hearing what they have to say, especially when they come from the United Nations family, is it really necessary to stand on such ceremony?

All effective multilateral forums may rely as much as necessary on reports or facts provided by an impartial body, not only for matters relating to the practical organization of meetings but also first and foremost for substantive matters. The Security Council of the United Nations, for example, does not hesitate to ask the Secretariat to draft reports on a great many subjects.

Lastly, we should respond to the legitimate applications of the many States seeking to join this forum. As a representative of France, I am naturally sensitive to the expectations of other States of the European Union, without excluding, of course, other regions of the world. We are therefore in favour of limited enlargement provided that a fair balance is struck between the number of States to be welcomed and improvements in the effectiveness of the forum.

Mr. President, these, in our view, are the avenues that must be explored to improve the functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. For us, this way is preferable to attempts to use circumvention to launch negotiations on a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material, or the even more drastic solutions that have been mentioned by certain people, such as suspending or cancelling the forum outright.

Let us bear in mind that if that were to happen, if our forum were put in sleep mode, we know what we would lose, although we do not know what we would gain in exchange. We would lose the only permanent forum agreed on by the international community to carry out disarmament negotiations, the only forum in which all the States with key capacities in the most sensitive of areas are represented, and, lastly, the continuous presence here in Geneva of experts on both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, experts who provide expertise that does not exist in any other multilateral capital.

**Mr. Drayage** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, we are pleased with the manner in which you are presiding over this Conference. As the sole negotiating body on disarmament, the Conference has been in a deadlock for more than 15 years. The problem has only recently become visible, although there has been real deadlock for a long time.

The Conference on Disarmament, like every other international body, needs regular evaluation and assessment. In our assessment we have to be fair by avoiding exaggeration, pessimism and prejudice. This evaluation should be transparent, comprehensive and conducive to the goal of strengthening the body in question – the Conference on Disarmament. This distrustful, emotional diagnosis combined with a specific focus on the future of the Conference on Disarmament can only aggravate the situation by undermining the credibility of the Conference without providing a reasonable alternative.

The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament put into place disarmament machinery, but there is a need to address the challenges to its effectiveness. The best way for addressing these challenges is the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We therefore support the early convening of such a conference.

The Conference on Disarmament is a well-known body in the field of disarmament multilateral diplomacy with some record of achievement in the field of a legally binding instrument forming the cornerstone and major body of the international non-proliferation regime. While the *raison d'être* of the Conference is nuclear disarmament, it is unfortunate that we have to accept that this body has made little contribution to nuclear disarmament.

The promotion of multilateralism as the core principle of negotiation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation is of the utmost importance. In this regard the Conference on Disarmament remains the sole multilateral negotiation body on disarmament.

Its specific composition, broad agenda and special rules of procedure give the Conference on Disarmament a unique stance. We support every measure that strengthens its credibility and proper functioning. We believe that promoting the work of the Conference cannot be achieved by changing the format or the modality of the rules of procedure or by changing our interpretation of these rules. It is worth recalling that not only were all existing multilateral treaties negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament under the same rules of procedure, including the rule of consensus, but also that the sensitive nature of issues related to the security of nations and disarmament obligate us to adopt similar rules in the negotiation of multilateral disarmament treaties in other forums.

The issue of the assessment of the work of the Conference on Disarmament and disarmament is serious. We should deal with the root causes of the problem and be careful about emotional moves that divert the momentum created recently to cosmetic changes in the form and procedure, without tackling the substance or making some proposal to change the body and place of negotiation unaware of the inherent problem in the dominant cost-free approach of negotiations sought by some countries.

The crux of the problem of the inactivity of the Conference on Disarmament over the last decade is the lack of political will for moving towards the realization of the

principle of increased security for all by eliminating the common threat posed to the international community by nuclear weapons and inertia about changing a self-centred attitude into a noble approach of cooperative sustainable security.

The persistent resistance against the active functioning of the Conference on Disarmament by starting negotiations on all core issues is mainly because of one reason – the fact that the Conference is not mandated to maintain the status quo. It is mandated to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties and thus to change the status quo. If the Conference had fulfilled its real mandate through the negotiation of a treaty banning the production, development, possession and use of nuclear weapons, the status quo would have been changed, and those who had the special privilege of being regarded as the “haves” would have lost this advantage. Therefore resistance against fulfilling the mandate of the Conference is high, and as long as the mindset for recognition of some values for nuclear weapons does not change, and the nuclear-weapon States are not willing to engage in any negotiation that requires a change to the status of their own arsenal or compromises their nuclear power, we will not achieve any breakthrough in fulfilling the mandate of this body. Thus this impasse is not a problem of form but a problem of substance that does not relate to any procedural problem in the Conference, but has a close link with the lack of political will to make progress in the realm of disarmament.

I would like to stress here that the main task of the Conference is to negotiate disarmament. Taking into account the existence of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention, nuclear disarmament remains the only top priority for the Conference. Its agenda is designed in a manner that helps the start of negotiations on concerted and jointly reinforcing international instruments for nuclear disarmament. Therefore the Conference is not a single-issue venue, and a lack of consensus on the scope of negotiations on one issue cannot prevent the delegations from starting negotiations on the others. On the contrary, I believe that the difficulties we are facing originate from the refusal of some countries to deal seriously with nuclear disarmament. We believe that the early commencement of negotiations within the Conference, on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified time frame, including a nuclear weapons convention, is the urgent need of the disarmament machinery today.

This convention will prohibit the possession, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons, leading to their ultimate destruction. If we start these negotiations in the Conference, we will be in a position to comprehensively tackle all the core issues on the agenda in a balanced manner. These, of course, will deal with all aspects of fissile materials in a comprehensive manner, the legitimate right of non-nuclear-weapon States for security assurances and also the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The nuclear weapons convention provides an overall broad structure that coherently preserves the security of all nations by avoiding the current piecemeal disjointed cost-free approach for nuclear-weapon States. Proposals aimed at trying to divert the attention and focus of the international community from the main core issue is an example of following this self-centred cost-free approach and, as such, is not acceptable.

The radical proposal to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty outside the Conference on Disarmament is neither feasible nor acceptable. Last but not least, the Conference is an independent organization with its own rules of procedure; it is not a subsidiary body of the United Nations. Therefore any recommendation of the General Assembly will be of an advisory nature on which the Conference can take its own decision.

**Mr. Vasiliev** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I would like to join my colleagues in expressing my appreciation for the discussion that you have led. In my view, it is very useful and interesting. In this connection, I have set aside my prepared statement and would like to share my thoughts on the outcome of the discussion. I would also like to beg the interpreters' indulgence, as I am going to speak extemporaneously.

Like most delegations, we are not pleased with the current situation in the Conference on Disarmament. The Russian delegation has previously shown flexibility. I would like to recall in this connection that we once gave up linking negotiations over outer space with a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), which was a significant step forward on our part. Later on, like many other States, we naturally supported document CD/1864. We were also ready to support other documents on a programme of work, including the latest Egyptian proposals, which are well known. As you know, we also informally proposed a way forward on a programme of work, during the last session of the General Assembly, concerning the elaboration of the basic elements of an FMCT.

Unfortunately, the discussion that we have been having today seems once again to take two tacks. Is it procedural questions that are a stumbling block to our work, or are there much deeper and political reasons? The representative of Iran who spoke before me quite rightly said that the rules of procedure themselves had not prevented this body from concluding important disarmament agreements in the past. I would like in this connection to cite a very telling example involving the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was, of course, developed in the Conference on Disarmament. When efforts to overcome procedural questions proved unsuccessful, the matter was referred to the General Assembly for consideration. Although the Treaty was signed in 1996, more than 16 years later it has still not entered into force. I think that we all understand very well that the prospects for the entry into force of the Treaty do not depend at all on whether the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization recruits 10 lawyers to review some legal documents or dismisses 100 staff members. They depend on the political will and decisions of the States on which the Treaty's entry into force hinges. It is, therefore, hardly a matter of procedural issues but rather of very specific political ones.

As we see it, there have been two basic approaches to the proposals and remedies which have been put forward and widely discussed in the corridors of the Conference on Disarmament today. One approach is to bypass the Conference on Disarmament one way or another and begin the negotiation process in parallel forums or involve the General Assembly in this. In any case, this would lead to the breakdown of the Conference – we must be clear about that. I should also note that these proposals are not thoroughly worked out. We have a saying in Russia: “It’s easier to pull down than to build.” What I mean is that before proposing something constructive one has to be fully aware of where it will lead. Unfortunately, we do not see where these proposals will lead.

There is another point of view, and I am glad to note that it is the prevailing one: that we need to preserve the Conference on Disarmament. Several specific proposals as to how we may start up discussions again in this forum have been put forward. In particular, I support the ideas expressed by the representative of the United Kingdom. For our part, we also wished to propose to reflect on this in order to explore the possibility of adopting a so-called light programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament.

*(spoke in English)*

To adopt a so-called light programme of work that provides for dealing with all four core issues.

*(spoke in Russian)*

It seems to us that this is not a matter of wording but of how we are to understand this. The Russian Federation and China introduced a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects in 2008. This was not even done in the framework of the programme of work but rather in the framework of the agenda. Nevertheless, it allowed us to make significant progress in discussion of the treaty's main elements. It seems to us that if discussions were

held on the issue of the FMCT, even in the framework of a “light” programme of work, including the technical seminars that were conducted on the initiative of Germany and will be conducted on the initiative of the Netherlands, this would lead us to an understanding of the purposes and principles of a possible future FMCT. Moreover, the status of such discussions would be quite different.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we are faced with an important choice. We have little time before the General Assembly, and if we miss this opportunity we will be up against the breakdown of the Conference on Disarmament. Therefore, we need to rally around this forum. It would be ideal if we could agree on a programme of work for this forum before the end of the session.

**Mr. Zvekić** (Serbia): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you on your presidency and to thank you and your peers for the decision to dedicate two separate sessions within this year’s schedule of activities to the important issue of revitalization. This is a logical sequence in the circumstances of deadlock.

Serbia aligns itself with the statements delivered by Denmark on behalf of the European Union and Croatia on behalf of the informal group of observer States. There cannot be a revitalized Conference on Disarmament without the expanded Conference on Disarmament. As noted in Mr. Tokayev’s remarks, made in this chamber exactly four months ago, on 14 February 2012, in the past, expansion was considered agreed and realized, never having caused any harm to the substantive work of the Conference. Therefore it is even more difficult to understand and accept the approach of preserving the exclusive Conference on Disarmament, in today’s globalized interlinked world, with all the issues on the agenda of universal importance, as a petrified relic. Exclusive membership within the United Nations system today does not fit with the times.

The blockage that we have been facing is double-edged – in a substantive sense, for no consensus reached on substantive negotiations and on procedural issues, with the expansion of the membership as one of them. There is one common thread or point for this double-edged blockage – none of them has been given a chance even to explore possible ways forward, which is not good for the future of the Conference. Give us a chance.

Serbia also supports the consideration of other issues raised in Mr. Tokayev’s remarks, in particular the duration and a more active role for the presidency of the Conference, as well as a possible reformatting of an outdated 1978 agenda. We fully support the idea launched by Ireland to create a working group on revitalization.

**Mr. Gill** (India): Mr. President, let me begin by noting that the subject of our meeting today is not part of the Conference’s traditional agenda but has been discussed both here in the Conference and in the General Assembly over the past two years.

India has participated and shared its perspectives in these meetings. For instance, the Indian External Affairs Minister attended the high-level meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in September 2010. We have also listened carefully to what others who attach importance to the subject have said or proposed, and we will reflect carefully on what we have heard today.

India has always upheld the Conference’s unique importance as a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum recognized as such by the international community at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In keeping with the importance we attach to the Conference, we welcome efforts that bring us closer to negotiations on disarmament and international security issues and uphold the value of this forum. Conversely, we believe that efforts that take us further away from consensus or question the Conference’s role should be avoided.

We share the disappointment of other member States at the continuing impasse in the Conference. Despite the efforts of successive presidents and members over the last two years, the Conference has been unable to agree on a programme of work and undertake its primary task of negotiating multilateral treaties. However, we believe that the Conference or its rules of procedure are not to be blamed for this impasse. On the contrary, the rules of procedure provide the necessary assurance to member States that their security interests are fully protected while they engage substantively with other militarily significant States on issues that have a vital bearing on their national security interests.

I want to recall here that the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament accorded nuclear disarmament the highest priority. India has been steadfast in its support for global non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament. It is a painful reality that, more than three decades after the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world remains a distant goal, not least due to the inability of the Conference to agree on negotiations on nuclear disarmament. The attainment of the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world will require commitments embedded in an agreed multilateral framework involving all the States possessing nuclear weapons, which, incidentally, are represented in the Conference.

The last programme of work adopted by the Conference by its consensus decision contained in document CD/1864 of May 2009 included the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Our subsequent discussions and meetings have demonstrated a broad measure of support for that decision. We support the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations in the Conference as part of a programme of work that does not reopen the long-standing consensus in the international community on the basic goal and mandate of the FMCT. This is without diminishing the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament.

The Conference continues to have the mandate, membership, credibility and rules of procedure that discharge its responsibilities as a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum now and into the future. It is up to the member States to make it work by negotiating multilateral treaties that can be signed, ratified and implemented universally. After all, as our colleague from Mexico pointed out, international organizations and the disarmament machinery do not exist independently of our consciousness and will. We cannot take a disembodied view of the disarmament machinery; therefore, we do not believe that proposals which question the viability or relevance of the Conference or even suggest unrealistic alternatives will lead to useful or productive results in taking forward the agreed multilateral agenda with the participation of all relevant countries.

In conclusion, we hope that our deliberations and actions today and later this year will reaffirm the role of the Conference as a single disarmament negotiating forum and seek to give impetus to our efforts for resumption of substantive work including negotiations in this forum.

**Mr. Lee Joo-il** (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, I will be brief. Recently we have witnessed many positive steps towards the long-awaited breakthrough in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Accordingly, the expectations of international society for the revitalization of the Conference have become greater now than ever.

Reflecting the aspiration of the international community, a high-level meeting was convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in September 2010 as a response of the international community to the Conference on Disarmament. There was also a follow-up debate on the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament in New York last July. Nevertheless, the Conference continues to make little progress, and as such the patience of the international community is gradually running out. Last year, the General



Assembly once again called for the adoption of the programme of work in the Conference and the commencement of substantive work. Further paralysis of the Conference might not only jeopardize its status and legitimacy as the premier forum for disarmament but also damage the very foundations of the multilateral disarmament machinery. I firmly believe that the Conference should act quickly if it wishes to continue playing a central role.

In order to encourage the Conference to move forward, above all it is necessary for each member State to demonstrate more political flexibility with regard to its security considerations and *modus operandi*. Only when member States show flexibility and a spirit of cooperation will the Conference on Disarmament be able to evolve significantly in keeping up with the rapidly changing disarmament climate. What the Conference on Disarmament process needs now is not an endless and empty debate but concrete action. The Republic of Korea for its part will do its utmost to set the Conference on Disarmament process in motion.

My delegation also takes note of the proposals made by the Secretary-General of the Conference in February 2012. I agree with his view that procedural reform could be a stepping stone towards generating political will for the revitalization of the Conference. It would be useful to discuss the possible change in the Conference rules of procedure, including whether the consensus rule continues to be applied even in purely procedural matters. The rule of consensus has been abused to the point that the body itself is deadlocked. We have to keep in mind that the Conference on Disarmament is not an end itself, but one of the main disarmament tools.

**Mr. Öskiper** (Turkey): Mr. President, we welcome the addition of a new item to our schedule of activities, namely the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, which we are doing today. We appreciate the discussions on this matter since the Conference indeed needs to be revitalized. This platform has been in a stalemate for too long and it needs to reassume its task of negotiating treaties. On this understanding Turkey supported and actively contributed to the high-level meeting held in New York in September 2010. We have listened carefully to the opinions of the other delegations today. Many significant views have been expressed. We value the whole atmosphere of discussion today; therefore allow me to briefly make comments on behalf of Turkey.

For Turkey, the concept of revitalization means the beginning of negotiations for which the Conference has a mandate, and nothing else. In fact, to put it in a very rudimentary fashion, if the Conference is not negotiating, it is not functional. If it starts negotiating, it is revitalized. At the moment the Conference is unfortunately not working; therefore all our efforts should be exerted to this end. We should gear our discussions towards reaching a consensual programme of work and the commencement of negotiations. To this end, our discussions under this heading should be guided by the operative paragraphs of General Assembly resolution 66/66.

Of course this is a very difficult step – we are all aware of that. Bearing in mind the recent past of this body, we all know how difficult this can get. Nevertheless, if we were to start believing that efforts towards revitalization are tantamount to other secondary and arguably simpler steps just because consensually accepting a programme of work and beginning negotiations seems difficult to us, we would only deceive ourselves.

The problems faced by the Conference do not stem from its rules of procedure or from its internal dynamics. For my delegation, the Conference continues to retain the necessary mandate, membership and rules of procedure to discharge its functions. Therefore, we sincerely hope that the concept of revitalization is not misunderstood or misinterpreted to be understood as meaning discussions on procedural matters.

This delegation has time and again underscored our position towards the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament, but, having listened to the statements of some of the

delegations today, I wish to state once again for the record that there is not consensus on the issue of the expansion of the Conference or the appointment of a special coordinator on that issue for the time being. The time is simply not right for that. We should be careful to avoid creating a misconception in the outside world that the Conference is actually working to introduce into our deliberations additional points of contention which would inevitably dilute our focus on the main substantive work.

To conclude, allow me to reiterate that the resumption of the substantive work of the Conference with the consent of all its members will contribute to the improvement of international efforts towards non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. To this end, we should try to generate more mutual understanding and confidence within the Conference, while not ignoring developments outside the Conference.

**Mr. Khelif** (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would like first to complement the quotation from Alexandre Dumas with which the Ambassador of Spain concluded his statement in order to make a case for waiting with another quotation from the same author, who said that waiting is sometimes more difficult than acting. In this case, extending the wait could seriously damage the Conference on Disarmament. The solution that was mentioned by certain colleagues is to adopt a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that takes into account the security requirements of all and that could be implemented as soon as possible. The delegation of Algeria continues to think that document CD/1864 provides a basis for a programme of work that would meet those criteria, with elements that would be evolving, and not a basis for priority setting.

Our delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having taken the initiative to organize a discussion on this subject, which, as our colleague from India has emphasized, does not constitute an agenda item.

We would like to inform you about two major elements concerning the subject under discussion. The first concerns the approach to the issue. In our delegation's view, a comprehensive approach to the issue of revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament should be taken, and discussions should cover all the elements that are preventing the Conference from making progress towards negotiations. It is not a matter of including the subject in a specific initiative at the level of the General Assembly, and, like the Non-Aligned Movement, we would have liked to hold a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to look into the problems facing multilateral mechanisms for negotiations on disarmament, including the Conference on Disarmament.

We would have liked, Mr. President, for the issue to be treated as well in the notes provided to you by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), so that we might enter into discussions with a comprehensive view of the matter.

In addition, Mr. President, the term "revitalize" seems to us a little unfair in the light of the efforts that are made at the Conference on Disarmament. As the Ambassador of Spain has recalled, in etymological terms, "revitalize" means "restore life". Many efforts are made in the Conference on Disarmament which must not be disregarded. The aim of our presence here today, as in the past, is in particular to revive the Conference on Disarmament and to be a party to those efforts. We would have preferred the term "reinvigorate", from the perspective of giving new impetus to the Conference. To revitalize or reinvigorate the Conference, it is important to carry out a reliable and full assessment, that is, a diagnosis, in order to be able to administer appropriate treatment rather than mere palliatives. The first element of this assessment, in our delegation's view, is the fact that the deadlock in the Conference is liable to threaten its very survival. The second element is that non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly those that do not enjoy any nuclear protection, are not the cause of this situation, which is of no benefit to them.

Third, the benchmark for security that we are seeking through negotiations at the Conference is collective security – security for the entire international community, and not the juxtaposition of national securities. We believe that the States members of the Conference, especially nuclear-weapon States, have a particular responsibility given that they have a weapon capable of sealing humanity's fate. They must therefore look beyond national security and consider the survival of humanity.

Certain delegations here believe that the deadlock in the Conference stems partly from procedural considerations. We would be interested to see how a discussion on procedure at the Conference could restart negotiations at the Conference, given that the main factor underlying the deadlock is a political one involving in particular the refusal to make progress towards nuclear disarmament, as provided for in the founding document of the Conference on Disarmament, known as the "decatalogue". This document is the starting point for the Conference on Disarmament, and if we do not agree on the implementation of the mandate set out therein, how are we to make progress and allow the Conference to begin and carry out its work?

Certain delegations have also put the difficulty facing the Conference on Disarmament down to the fact that the programme of work is established on a yearly basis. The Algerian delegation is not of this opinion: the problems have to do with the way in which the programme of work is drawn up, not how often it is drawn up. The rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament provide for a calendar of activities, and it stands to reason that a calendar of activities would cover no more than a year at a time. Perhaps the problem lies in the fact that we have always put the programme of work in the same category as the establishment of subsidiary bodies, whereas the establishment of such bodies under the rules of procedure is possible provided that there is agreement on it. If there is agreement, member States may put in place a subsidiary body that they deem to have satisfied all the requirements for negotiations to be begun. These are the points that our delegation would like to raise concerning the issue of reinvigorating the Conference on Disarmament.

**Mr. Hoffmann** (Germany): Mr. President, let me say at the outset that we very much appreciate the contribution by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and, of course, we support the statement of the European Union. We welcome the fact that the topic of revitalization, which is basically the situation of the Conference on Disarmament, is a topic on the schedule of activities. That clearly indicates its acknowledgement of the fact that there is a problem in the Conference on Disarmament, that something is not in order, that there is a sense of crisis; otherwise we would not need to talk about the revitalization, or, as our British colleague Ambassador Adamson said, I think a week or so ago, we would talk about the resuscitation of the Conference on Disarmament. I think no one can deny that there is a problem. I hear the words *stalemate*, *impasse*, *deadlock*, *blockage* all the time. I would hope that colleagues will remember this when we draft the report of our session, and I have taken note of what was said by the representative of Switzerland in this regard.

Now, as far as our approach is concerned, Germany continues to attach importance to the Conference. We regard it as an important forum, and we would very much prefer to work in this forum. We regret the standstill, and we regret that, for decades, policies of linkage and blockage were characteristic of this forum. We call upon member States not to prevent negotiations by setting an unnecessarily high bar for the start of negotiations. I noted with interest what was said by our colleague the representative of Brazil – that when you want to prevent a negotiation you set the bar very high. I think this should particularly be the case — that you should not set the bar so high — when you are clearly in a minority situation, in fact, when you are the only member preventing the adoption of a programme of work. It in fact poses a very fundamental problem for the entire international community

when in a forum one or two members block what others want to achieve in terms of new instruments in the field of disarmament. I would say that if a forum continues to haggle over how to start a process, it does not look good at all. We do not look good at all, and I think that we should work out these difficulties in negotiations themselves rather than trying to sort them out by way of adopting or preventing programmes of work.

In this context I would again like to thank the Egyptian presidency for its effort in the draft decision contained in CD/1933. I would have thought that this really represented a fair compromise, but in view of this experience I think one has to say that there is no prospect at all, realistically, that we will have a breakthrough on the issue of the programme of work. Therefore Germany is certainly open to other options, and the basic problem is how to overcome the obvious abuse of the consensus rule to get the process started. When you reflect on that, I think quite naturally the General Assembly and the First Committee come into focus.

We start from the fact that it was only one delegation which objected to the approach in the draft decision on a programme of work, and I say this with regard to the First Committee. What was the essence, as I see it, contained in the draft decision on a programme of work? The essence was an intention to deal with a number of core issues in disarmament, including starting to work out elements for an instrument on ending the production of fissile material for nuclear-weapon purposes and questions related to that. I believe that the First Committee should try to build on that.

However, it is not enough for the General Assembly, as it has done many times in the past, only to call upon the Conference on Disarmament to get its act together. I think that that is not enough. We have tried it, to no avail, because the Conference does not heed that call since there are difficulties. The General Assembly needs to take a decision itself on the matter. In a sense, we in the Conference on Disarmament and the international community are confronted with a case of emergency, namely a specialized forum like the Conference is blocked by one delegation, and that is where the General Assembly needs to step in; it is certainly legitimate for it to do so. As we all know, it has taken fundamental decisions adopted by special sessions, including the first special session devoted to disarmament, and it could do something with regard to the Conference on Disarmament as well. It could look at other processes. In this context I would only say that, for example, the arms trade treaty process comes to mind. I think one can learn from such other processes, and it would be a way to get a process started. I listened with interest to what was said by our Russian colleague, which basically, if I understood him correctly, was to say: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." I would not say that the Conference on Disarmament is broken, but we have a real problem. That is why I think that the General Assembly should take a look at this matter. Furthermore, for those sceptics who say that, as a model, the arms trade treaty process might create difficulties, I think that there are enough safeguards in that process to make everybody feel that they are on safe ground.

It is only one possible idea, but I think we need to be creative. We should at least agree on the usefulness of technical discussions, like the ones we initiated together with the Netherlands a couple of days ago. Maybe this would be an opportunity to lay the groundwork for the future. To come to my concluding remark, stalemate cannot continue to be an option for this body and for the General Assembly.

**The President:** On the advice of the Secretary-General of the Conference, I would now like to release the interpreters and thank them for going over time. We will continue to the end with the last speaker on the list of speakers, and possibly others, and my concluding remarks, without interpretation

**Ms. Kennedy** (United States of America): Mr. President, I will make very few remarks. Let me just say that I think very hard questions have been posed today. I think a

number of real truths have been voiced today. I recall our Austrian colleague saying that 15 years of paralysis in the Conference is unacceptable and inexcusable. We agree. Mexico has pointed to the fact that real work goes on elsewhere. That is a truth. Let me also thank you, Mr. President, for arranging this discussion today, and the Secretary-General of the Conference for his efforts to focus on this issue, and, of course, those of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. We very much share the concern over the paralysis in this body. We do not believe that procedural issues are the nub of the issue or that it is a lack of political will; it is the fact that there is a clash of political views on substance, for example, our "consensus minus one" on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) referred to by the representative of France. It is this lack of agreement that has compelled us to think hard and work hard to find a way forward through consensus.

We continue to believe that today's priority disarmament task is an FMCT. These efforts will continue. I mentioned that consensus is an essential condition for us, but we agree with those who say, for example, that in this body consensus has been abused concerning procedural issues. We would also agree with the comment that was made that the bar should not be set too high in a way that would prevent a way forward. On the other hand, we would also say that it cannot be set too low.

We have tried to be creative and flexible and support efforts such as those by the Egyptian President to find a way forward, and we will continue to constructively engage in that area. However, the light approach that we heard posited today would in fact be so light that it could be completely insubstantial.

In view of the lateness of the hour, I am not going to comment on some of the ideas on procedure, the reforms that were mentioned today. I think that some of them certainly bear thinking about, but my delegation does not believe that the issue is one of procedure.

**The President:** I thank the Ambassador of the United States for her statement, and I also thank her for her flexibility and understanding in speaking without interpretation under such time constraints. This concludes my list of speakers. Does any delegation wish to take the floor to react to any other statement? As that does not seem to be the case, this concludes our business for today. The next session devoted to the topic of revitalization is on 21 August.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 19 June at 10 a.m. It will focus on the issue of the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament and on the prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, with a general focus on nuclear disarmament. I also wish to point out that a high-level statement will be made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Dr. Erkki Tuomioja, at the beginning of the session, at 10 a.m.

*The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.*