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FINAL RECORD OF THE FOUR HUNDRED AND FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 9 April 1987, at 10 a.m.

President:

Mr. M. Vejvoda

(Czechoslovakia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 404th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the beginning, I wish to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, who is addressing the Conference today. I should like to note that the Minister for Foreign Affairs has addressed the plenary several times during previous annual sessions of the Conference and, in that connection, I wish to thank him for the interest shown in our activities.

In accordance with its programme of work, the Conference today continues its consideration of agenda item 6 entitled "Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States Against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons". In conformity with rule 30 of the rules of procedure, however, members wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference. I have on my list of speakers for today, the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Sri Lanka and Belgium. I now give the floor to the first speaker, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati.

Mr. VELAYATI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, at the outset let me express my pleasure at having the opportunity to address this august body. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for the kind words you addressed to me. Allow me also to sincerely wish you, as well as other distinguished representatives, every success in the very important task and responsibility you bear.

More than ever in the history of mankind, the arms race of unprecedented speed has imperiled the very existence of human kind. It is not an exaggeration for me to say today that the saturation of the world arsenals, in both conventional and nuclear terms, has brought us to a state where even one minor mistake may ignite such an unextinguishable fire that no States, individually or collectively will be able to control it.

This is proved to be, today, a statement of fact rather than a pessimistic belief. It is precisely for this reason that in the present situation prevailing in our world, even countries in areas most remote from regions of tension and the arms race cannot, by any chance, remain indifferent vis-à-vis disarmament talks. This means that the disarmament talks are, more than any other international issue, of a global nature. How long can the whole world live with the nightmare of a nuclear holocaust? How long can we remain silent witnesses to the ever-widening gap between the concrete results of bilateral or multilateral disarmament talks on the one hand, and the uncontrolled and unpredictable trend of the arms race on the other? How long can the developing countries and even the people of many developed ones sacrifice their bread to provide for all the expenses of deadly weapons?

These are the questions which should be dealt with seriously in this and other international fora responsible for disarmament.

Since we all agree that this Conference bears the major part of the international responsibility for multilateral disarmament talks, our response

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to the major issues and questions of global concern which I referred to is necessarily dependent upon our assessment of the work of this Conference. In that assessment we have to be frank and sincere. As members of this important body, we have to be at the forefront of all those countries which seek to address the impediments to our achievements. Having said that, I want to reassure you that I by no means intend to undermine the significance of our collective work. I cannot but express at the same time our regrets at having bitterly observed, over many years now, that some States have been creating serious and practical obstacles in the way of the work of this body.

We have already expressed many times in this forum the fact that at the present situation, when almost all parties to disarmament talks are aware of the limits and different aspects of technicalities of the subject under discussion, such technicalities have for long lost any basis to cause real practical obstacles in the way of disarmament negotiations.

In particular, I want to stress that non-nuclear-weapon States may not be deceived and convinced as to the slow pace of disarmament talks in this forum with the excuse of so-called "technical considerations". Lack of political will is the sole cause responsible for any stalemate in the whole area of disarmament.

Twenty-five years have elapsed since the commencement of the activities of the Conference on Disarmament but for the last decade we have not had any sizeable agreement in the relevant fields. Lack of agreement on the important issue of verification has been projected for many years as the major obstacle in the way of any serious development. True, verification in our view really constitutes one of the major guarantees for the establishment of an international, effective and collective control system over many fields of armament. But recent flexibilities offered in connection with verification, especially on-site inspection, has made this last technical excuse quite irrelevant.

With regard to the three fundamental agenda items namely Nuclear Test Ban (NTB), Cessation of the Nuclear Arms Race and Nuclear Disarmament, and also Prevention of Nuclear War, including All Related Matters, the Conference has achieved almost nothing. Nuclear tests are continuing unabated despite newly introduced ideas of a moratorium, and certain countries are insisting on pursuing these tests. Such tests cause irreversible damage to nature. These States shoulder a double responsibility: first, the damage caused by the very destructive tests which are detrimental to the environment; and second, the damage resulting from the development of a new generation of devastating nuclear weapons, which is the main purpose of such tests. Such immeasurable damage, under the pretext of defence or deterrence, is in fact a mockery of human destiny and neglects the men who will be directly or indirectly subject to the consequences of these tests.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, any new proposal or flexibility undoubtedly deserves a serious evaluation, even if such proposals, due to certain reasons outside the jurisdiction of this Conference, are not supported. The recent proposal on nuclear intermediate-range weapons is considered a positive development.

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I hereby caution all nuclear-weapon States which are ready to enter the club of nuclear-weapon States to take advantage of every possible opportunity to show their good faith and constructive intentions in the field of nuclear disarmament before the other countries.

By this, I want to stress that at this crucial juncture the attitude of the nuclear-weapon States is the predominant determining factor for the non-nuclear-weapon States to take up ideas such as nuclear-free zones. We hope that the last chances before a nuclear holocaust will be seized to couple unilateral positive measures, such as a nuclear-test ban, with collective efforts, in particular in the framework of this Conference, towards the adoption and effective implementation of international and comprehensive agreements in all nuclear-weapon fields, with the aim of the total elimination of the present nuclear arsenals and of halting production of any kind of such weapons in the future.

Turning to a subject which is to be discussed this week in the Conference, namely effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, I would like to state that we attach great importance to this issue. We believe that such assurances on the international scale should not only cover the nuclear field, but must be of a more comprehensive nature.

The use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States has remained a threat, whereas the use of conventional force in international relations is the main devil which has shed, in the course of last decades, the blood of innumerable human beings. The only means in the hands of countries which are not producers of conventional weapons is to resort to international legal instruments and leverage.

In this field, very unfortunately, I have to say that the present international instruments have failed to provide even some modest protection for the developing countries vis-à-vis the increasing use of force on a world scale. The imposed war by Iraq against my country, which has now entered its seventh year, is a vivid example of such practice in the world. Not only through all these years have international instruments not been able justly to put a halt to this invasion, but also some of the Powers have provided the aggressor with financial, political and weaponry assistance.

It is precisely because of such experiences that we have subscribed to the idea of the necessity of the establishment of a more effective international instrument to provide for the protection of all countries against any use of force by any State. No doubt, through the realization of the comprehensive programme of disarmament, a major part of this concern will be met, but until this is achieved we need to pursue simultaneously other effective confidence-building measures.

In our troubled region, particularly in the Persian gulf, which has been seriously suffering for many years now from unjustified interference by external Powers, the ever-increasing military presence of the alien Powers has been the main cause of regional tensions, thus resulting in the intensification of the militarization of the region.

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I should stress here that the essential measure in building confidence in our region is the dismantling of all military bases of alien Powers and putting an end to the presence of all naval forces of these Powers in the Persian Gulf waters. Furthermore, it is important that by providing necessary reliable international and regional instruments, all countries in the region should be assured against any regional or external act or threat of aggression.

The history of the imposed war against the Islamic Republic of Iran shows in the most vivid manner the fact that the present international instruments for the prevention and suppression of acts of aggression fall far short of any effect.

We all know that the most important of all such instruments, namely the provisions of the United Nations Charter, have not been able to have even some mitigating effect. Even commercial navigation and civil aviation have not been spared in our region from systematic military attacks, despite all existing international legal barriers.

After all the international condemnations of the deployment of chemical weapons by Iraq, the use of such weapons has been intensified in the whole course of the past years. The lack of any international guarantee for compliance with and international observance of the present rules and principles has led to the intensification of violations of international law on a world scale.

Here, and for this very reason, I would like to express our full support for the idea introduced in the Forty-first Session of the General Assembly in resolution 41/92 concerning the "establishment of a comprehensive system of international peace and security".

This is a positive view which merits further elaboration by this Conference in its coming sessions, but I would like to add that a very important step towards the achievement of an effective international peace and security system is to seek and encourage regional arrangements, which proves to be a more feasible task under the prevailing situations. Naturally and inevitably, such arrangements will provide the very necessary regional or global foundations to assure the countries not possessing destructive weapons.

In short, as a result of the experience we have had in our region, we have reached the conclusion that regional arrangements free from the influence of the Eastern or Western camps may in the best and shortest way serve the common task of confidence-building in general and of providing assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States vis-à-vis any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons in particular.

The agreement reached last year at the Stockholm Conference reflects the fact that Europe has already appreciated this notion, whereas unfortunately in other regions, especially in the disturbed areas and hot beds of tension, it has yet to be understood as it must be.

I have now to address one of the most important items of the agenda of the Conference, namely, chemical weapons. As a nation which has suffered most from the use of such barbaric weapons, I would like to assert that perhaps we

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are the most eligible member of the international community in giving a full assessment of the inhuman and devastating effects of the use of such weapons.

I need not embark upon any elaboration of technicalities. The numerous technical and medical reports prepared by United Nations expert missions dispatched to the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to have direct on-site inspections, have been made available to all Members of the United Nations. I would like rather to address some other important aspects of the matter.

First, the intensified, continuous and systematic use of chemical weapons by Iraq after the Security Council's condemnations of 26 March 1986, which unfortunately did not result in any effective international preventive reaction, bears witness, once more, to the fact that repetitious use of these weapons by Iraq has weakened the Geneva Protocol of 1925 to an unprecedented degree.

This fact substantiates the validity and necessity of the view once expressed in this very forum by one of the distinguished members of this Conference, that it is time for all we signatories to that Protocol, through one international announcement, re-express our commitments to this Protocol, as well as our determination to prevent any further violation of it by all international ways and means. I would like to repeat this appeal here to the Conference to consider seriously this very important suggestion which I am confident will reinforce the Protocol.

Secondly, some countries, in particular some of the members of this Conference, have already adopted a measure which in our view have been quite positive and effective. They have put a ban on the export to Iraq of any material which may be susceptible of being used as a chemical agent in chemical warfare.

While I would like to express my appreciation for such measures, I should stress that this must be a collective international practice, otherwise Iraq will find these materials on some other markets. Not only that, but the number of banned items, because of rather simple manufacturing technology, should be substantially increased, and cover all suspicious and potentially dangerous substances. The banning of the exportation of such items should be established through the United Nations as an international obligatory practice, and not be left only to the political will of States.

We expect this Conference seriously to consider this task. Needless to say, such arrangements should not only apply to our case but should also be an established procedure for any occasions of such a nature.

Thirdly, we have fortunately witnessed in recent months that positive initiatives for the total ban of the use, production, development and stockpiling of chemical weapons have been introduced, on the regional as well as international scale.

I cannot but express here our satisfaction at the initiative of your own Government, Mr. President, regarding a chemical-weapon-free zone in a part of Europe. I hope that this initiative will soon be realized and thus encourage other countries to embark upon similar initiatives. However, I have to stress

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that the lack of political will by some States shown in the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a more effective resolution in this connection, will raise doubts regarding the initiatives put forward by both blocs. Here I would like to say that the unilateral and multilateral position of all countries vis-à-vis the use of chemical weapons should once and for all remain independent from bilateral concerns of all countries. I would like to express our appreciation to those members of the Conference who have addressed and expressed concerns on the continuation and intensification of the use of chemical warfare by Iraq during the past CD sessions. Meanwhile we cannot ignore the fact that a few States, despite their international responsibilities, have failed to present any position in this connection.

This cannot be interpreted as anything other than deliberately overlooking the main issues of the work of this Conference at the expense of our common goals. I hope that this regretful practice will not be continued in this forum, and that all members will bear in mind that the world community seizes every opportunity to put our seriousness at test. Here I would like to bring to your attention that the last chemical weapons were used on 19 March 1987 and I would like to repeat, on 19 March 1987, and as a result great damage was inflicted. I hope that this time all members of this Conference will take clear positions against the continuation of such crimes.

Fourthly, the unprecedented level of the use of chemical warfare in recent years has proved beyond doubt that the effective implementation of the international convention on the production, use, stockpiling, transfer and development of chemical weapons is an urgent imperative. Any further postponement of the submission of the draft to the General Assembly under whatever pretext is not acceptable. However, we share the views expressed by those States which attach great importance to the issue of compliance. While an international verification and on-site inspection system is an undeniable necessity, the ultimate confidence in the convention would not be provided unless international punitive measures against any serious and deliberate violations of the convention would also be provided.

The Iraqi practice must always be kept in mind. The United Nations expert teams dispatched to our country to verify the use of chemical weapons have on numerous occasions come out with clear verified cases. At this point we would like to express our appreciation to those States which have, by convening educative international gatherings, enhanced public awareness about the inhuman effects of the use of these weapons.

Such endeavours will undoubtedly have substantial positive effects. Efforts by some of the Nordic countries are also impressive. Research programmes on verification of the implications of chemical weapons are still going on and we are awaiting the results. Similarly, research on the effects of the deployment of chemical weapons on the environment as well as remedies for chemically afflicted people and other research efforts are noteworthy.

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Finally, a chronological table and other specifications about the use of chemical weapons by the Iraqi régime has been provided in the annex */ for the further knowledge of the distinguished representatives.

I have not addressed the remaining agenda items, not because we do not appreciate the significance of every subject, but rather because the problem of the use of chemical weapons which our nation at the very moment is involved with, has compelled me to devote the main part of my intervention to this very important issue.

On the very significant matter of the arms race in outer space, I should like to stress that we fully endorse the views expressed by the Group of 21 in this regard.

With the speedy advancement of space technology, the sovereignty of countries not possessing these capabilities is being increasingly imperiled. The surveillance and spy satellites have provided their owners with possibilities which can easily trample the recognized rights of the countries of the world. Fortunately, many new ideas have been introduced recently in this connection, each of which merits full consideration. Outer space should remain forever safe for scientific explorations with the aim of serving humanity. In our view, the opening up of any new field of militarization is a crime against humanity, a crime which will be extended to the generations to come.

In the field of radiological weapons, too much attention has unfortunately been paid to marginal and subordinate issues. Banning radiological weapons and protection of nuclear installations against military attacks are not necessarily interlinked issues, and should be materialized through international agreements. We hope that the Conference will be able to take substantial steps towards this end before the forthcoming General Assembly.

Preventing any military aggression, both conventional and nuclear, is directly interlinked with the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament. While steps already taken in this connection, especially the work of the Ad Hoc Group, deserve profound appreciation, yet we should not forget that parallel to these endeavours, international, legal and political instruments should be reinforced and developed to an extent that makes military aggression extremely difficult and strongly punishable, if not impossible.

It is only in this way that real comprehensive disarmament may be achieved; otherwise, freedom of aggression will find the ways and means of its realization.

*/ The annex was circulated informally by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the end of the plenary meeting.

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In conclusion, I wish the distinguished members of the Conference on Disarmament success in shouldering this heavy and historic responsibility. The task before us is, more than ever before, clear and urgent in the history of multilateral disarmament talks. Let us refrain from making conflicting political views obstacles in the way of our global mission. I call on every member of this Conference to be a disarmament ambassador to his country and to the whole world, rather than being the representative of his country to the Conference. This sincere call is the manifestation of the will of the international community.

The PRESIDENT: I thank His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his important statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Conference and its President. I now give the floor to the second speaker, the representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Dhanapala.

Mr. DHANAPALA (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, the Sri Lanka delegation is happy to see you occupy the Presidency of our Conference for the final month of our spring session. Our two countries have friendly relations, and you and I have been closely associated in common endeavours in the field of disarmament, especially the Third Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the preparatory process that preceded it. We are confident that your natural flair for negotiation and wide experience will help you to lead the Conference into a more productive summer session. May I also thank the distinguished Ambassador of Cuba for his wise contribution as our President for the month of March.

We are honoured by the presence in the Conference this morning of His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, whose contribution we have listened to with great interest.

When I last addressed this Conference, we were then into the second week of our session. There was hope at that time, generated by international events and developments at the forty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly, that at long last the CD would become the arena of some positive action in specific areas, including the priority nuclear issues such as item 1 of our agenda--Nuclear Test Ban. Today, in retrospect, we must express satisfaction over the continuing activity in Ad Hoc Committees, Working Groups and informal consultations. Indeed the high level of this activity has been ascribed by some as the probable cause for the unprecedented paucity of speakers in plenary sessions during the month of March. We would like to believe that this activity does indeed signify something more real than apparent and that it is the harbinger of concrete agreements in the future. Where Ad Hoc Committees have been established but have delayed to commence substantive work, either through the lack of a Chairman or a work programme, we hope these procedural issues are not symptomatic of latent political differences. Where Ad Hoc Committees have not been established, we hope that ongoing negotiations will bear fruit, dislodging the needless apprehension that the pursuit of collective security can impair the defence of national security. The virtues of multilateralism and international co-operation which are proclaimed so vigorously by us all are applicable in all spheres, whether in achieving the restructuring of the existing international economic order on the basis of equity and justice, or in arriving at a comprehensive test-ban treaty as an essential step in achieving

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the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament to which we are all committed in terms of paragraph 51 of the Final Document of SSOD I. Let us therefore ensure that we practise consistently what we preach.

I make no apology for returning to the subject of item 5 of our agenda -- the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The overriding importance of the subject in the gamut of disarmament issues before us and in the light of contemporary developments justifies the preoccupation of several delegations, including my own, with this issue. In our statement of 17 February, the Sri Lanka delegation urged the acceptance of the modest improvement proposed by the Group of 21 in the mandate for an Ad Hoc Committee on item 5 of our agenda. In doing so we traced the respectable pedigree of the word "measures" over which so much unnecessary controversy has been created. We pointed out that paragraph 80 of the SSOD I Final Document had referred to the need for further measures in the prevention of an arms race to be taken and that successive resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly had also referred to this.

My delegation has been closely associated with the negotiations leading to the adoption of a single resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the General Assembly in recent years. In 1985, by a curious irony from the very group of delegations who have found the word "measures" unpalatable here, there came a proposal to the group of non-aligned countries that the operative paragraph in the General Assembly resolution relating to the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee should state that the objective of re-establishing an Ad Hoc Committee should be "with a view to the achievement of further effective and verifiable measures through appropriate international negotiations in order to prevent an arms race in space". In 1986 the proposal was again made by the same group of countries that an Ad Hoc Committee be re-established in the CD with an adequate mandate "with a view to achieving agreement with regard to effective measures to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects". While we acknowledge that the two fora -- the United Nations General Assembly and the CD -- are different, the context is the same and we find it inexplicable that a proposal made in the General Assembly regarding the mandate of a CD Ad Hoc Committee so as to achieve a consensus resolution is so strenuously opposed by the very authors of the proposal when we seek to include it in a non-negotiating mandate in the CD itself.

Be that as it may, we were content when through the wisdom of the distinguished Ambassador of China the device of a Presidential statement was adopted to facilitate the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on Outer Space with the distinguished Ambassador of Italy -- whose delegation has worked so long and with so much dedication on this issue -- as its Chairman. It was a matter of gratification that for the first time we were able to see this subsidiary body re-established in the first month of our session. Consequently, we have been deeply disappointed that a procedural wrangle over the programme of work should have delayed the substantive work of this body. There has recently been a revival of interest in the improved and effective functioning of our Conference -- a subject on which my delegation made a detailed plenary statement on 12 July 1984. To some the focus of attention is only the report-writing procedure. To my delegation, as well as to many others, there is this question together with a larger number of issues that must be addressed by the small group that we all now agree should be set up to

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consider this subject. They include the need to prevent the use of procedure to obstruct work on substance. I believe that our recent and unhappy experience over the Ad Hoc Committee on item 5 should lead us to a consideration of how we can prevent agreement on a programme of work being used as a pre-condition for the inauguration of substantive work in subsidiary bodies of this Conference. Such a situation was without precedent but we have just seen that it can arise.

With the resumption of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, delegations will now endeavour to ensure that constructive work is begun without delay. For our part we have found the contributions made in recent weeks in the plenary debate on this item replete with ideas that could be discussed further in the Ad Hoc Committee -- preferably with the assistance of experts. Among the ideas presented to us at this session is the proposal for a multilateral agreement conferring on space objects an immunity from attack or interference thereby contributing to confidence building and stability. We have stated before that while the militarization of space is a fait accompli, the weaponization of space is not -- at least not yet. By the militarization of space we refer to the fact that three out of four satellites in space are there for military purposes. To grant immunity to them is tantamount to legitimizing the military uses of space unless we are clear about their specific purpose and function. In this connection we would be well advised to re-examine the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space concluded in 1975. This Convention sought to establish a mandatory system of registering objects launched into outer space not only for identification purposes but also to, and I quote from the preamble, "contribute to the application and development of international law governing the exploration and use of outer space". Launching States are required under the Convention to inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations of specific details of space objects launched by them including their general function. In the implementation of this Convention there are many inadequacies, particularly concerning information on the function of space objects. In terms of Article X of the Convention the opportunity arose at the forty-first session of the General Assembly to re-examine the Convention. This opportunity was unfortunately missed because of disagreement among Member States and the Secretary-General was merely requested to prepare a report on the past application of the Convention to be submitted to the Legal Sub-Committee for the information of Member States. The report falls far short of the review exercise contemplated in Article X. The strengthening of this Convention must go hand in hand with any move to grant immunity to certain space objects.

Another interesting proposal made is that of an international inspectorate to supervise on-site the launching of space objects. We are aware that this proposal is conceived as a verification measure to ensure the non-deployment of space weapons. We appreciate this but would consider that in logical sequence it should be examined when we are negotiating a ban on all space weapons based on all physical principles. Again we believe that the strengthening of the Space Registration Convention should also be undertaken as a means of reinforcing the existing provisions to prevent an arms race in outer space. The continuing relevance of the proposal of France made at SSOD I for an international satellite monitoring agency has already been noted in our discussions at this session. The potential of such an agency to usher in an age of transparency and to assist in the verification of a future

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agreement banning space weapons requires to be explored fully. Vast strides in civilian space technology and the ready access to its benefits not only prove the importance of reserving space for exclusively peaceful purposes but also underscore the viability of satellite monitoring of disarmament agreements, including a ban on space weapons. The efficacy of an international satellite monitoring agency as compared to an international inspectorate and more importantly the cost-effectiveness of the two modes of verification require detailed study. We are aware of the useful work going on in Canada on verification, such as PAXSAT, and are grateful to Ambassador Beesley for his invitation to all CD delegations to attend the May workshop in Montreal. Another proposal is for an arms control and conflict observation satellite (ACCOS) to help in the observation of space weapon development. A recent SIPRI study recommends that these concepts of verification should be explored in the Ad Hoc Committee under item 5 of this Conference and we endorse this view.

The central issue is the need for an effective ban on space weapons. While we endeavour to negotiate an agreement or agreements for this purpose a number of measures have been suggested. They include an ASAT weapon ban, an amendment to the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, a "rules of the road" code for space, etc. The proposals arise out of a fundamental desire to act urgently to prevent an arms race in outer space. We have always recognized that the developments of concern to us are not confined to one space Power. The space weapons ban has of necessity to apply universally and must have effective provisions for verification, as General Assembly resolution 41/53 recognizes. Interim measures must also be applicable universally. That is why it is envisaged that with an ASAT weapon ban the existing ASAT system will be destroyed. My delegation does not consider it appropriate to enter into the controversy surrounding the interpretation of Article V of the bilateral Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Our objective is a multilateral agreement to ban all space weapons including anti-ballistic missiles and other ballistic missile defence systems under the terms of General Assembly resolution 41/53. The same resolution emphasizes the peaceful uses of space and we welcome in this context the Agreement on Co-operation in Exploring and Using Space for Peaceful Purposes signed by the Governments of the USSR and the United Kingdom on 31 March in Moscow.

I have referred already to the ASAT weapon ban which has been proposed. The Harare Declaration of Non-Aligned Heads of State or Government specifically called on this Conference and stressed the urgency of halting the development of anti-satellite weapons and the dismantling of the existing system. In negotiating an ASAT weapon ban we recognize that such weapons must be defined since space objects could be used in an ASAT role to disable other satellites by impact or explosion. A useful distinction has therefore been made between dedicated ASATs designed and tested for a flexible attack capability, and ancillary ASATs with a limited and not clearly identifiable ASAT capability. A proliferation of ASAT capability is a real possibility and can endanger the peaceful uses of space.

In the haste to deploy weapons in space as defensive systems we have noticed a number of novel arguments being advanced. We were intrigued to hear last week that an arms race in space began in 1957 and has continued since then. There is firstly an obvious illogicality of seeking to shut the stable

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door after the horse has bolted by preventing something that supposedly began 30 years ago through item 5 of an agenda -- a task in which all delegations are engaged, namely the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Secondly we find that there is clearly a lack of agreement on what space arms are. Can we therefore not discuss a common definition of space weapons or space arms as we sought to do in the Ad Hoc Committee last year despite the silence of those who only want a prolonged exegetical exercise on the treaties relating to outer space? Is the inter-continental ballistic missile a space weapon merely because it passes through space in its trajectory? In the view of my delegation this is a question to be discussed in the Ad Hoc Committee and we hope there will be a readiness on the part of all delegations to engage in such discussion.

The Outer Space Treaty of 1967, to which Sri Lanka is a party, specifically prohibits by its Article IV the placing in orbit of any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, the installation of such weapons on celestial bodies or the stationing of such weapons in outer space in any other manner. At the time of adoption of this treaty the Sri Lanka delegation expressed disappointment that military activities were not prohibited. Those States who acquiesced in this glaring lacuna must not now endeavour to make a virtue out of it.

Differences of opinion in our work in this Conference are to be expected. To attribute them to a failure to study the issues or to a state of ignorance is both patronising and regrettable. My delegation has spoken frequently against the deployment of ballistic missile defence (BMD) systems by any country, buttressing our arguments with the opinion of scientists. There has been a significant decrease today in the claims being made for such systems. The quantum leap in the arms race as a consequence of the manufacture and deployment of such weapons has been frequently stated. For example, the mirrors needed for giant laser weapons are estimated by one expert to be "larger and more robust than the 200-inch Mount Palomar which required years of skilled labour and millions of dollars to make". The orbiting fortresses contemplated to provide an area defence will of course be defensive systems as well as offensive systems capable of using deadly lasers against ground targets or to cause firestorms devastating crops and forests. With such an offensive propensity it follows that such systems would invite attack by weapons including laser weapons which could be manufactured for a fraction of the cost of these elaborate BMD systems. The obvious question is not why we should then be concerned over the creation of such systems but why we need go into such a significantly new scale of arms expenditure involving a new arena -- space?

Another type of BMD system contemplated is the so-called "pop-up defence such as the "Excalibur" device powered by a nuclear explosion which could release electromagnetic pulses capable of wiping out power and communications systems over a vast area. Whatever the system the invulnerability of it is now not a claim made even by its advocates. It will lead to the manufacture of an over-kill capacity of missiles invalidating the deterrent value of the system. Additionally, of course, there is the danger of pre-emptive attacks. BMD systems of any type will heighten the element of uncertainty leading to a greater threat of nuclear war. We hope that in the Ad Hoc Committee we can catalogue the types of weapons and activities we seek to exclude from space.

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We have therefore a heavy agenda before the Ad Hoc Committee on the prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. We must hasten to get through the agenda in order to negotiate an agreement for the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Arthur Clarke, Chancellor of Sri Lanka's University of Moratuwa, recalled in his Jawarharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture in New Delhi last November an article written by him in the immediate aftermath of Hiroshima which concluded "The only defence against the weapons of the future is to prevent them ever being used. In other words, the problem is political and not military at all. A country's armed forces can no longer defend it; the most they can promise is the destruction of the attacker". That wisdom is as relevant today for space weapons as it was four decades ago for nuclear weapons. We must devise multilateral agreements to prevent them being manufactured and deployed, whether for offensive or defensive purposes. That task can only be achieved in the Conference on Disarmament with the active co-operation of all delegations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Dhanapala, for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the last speaker inscribed on my list for today, the representative of Belgium, Ambassador Clerckx.

Mr. CLERCKX (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, we would like to extend our warmest congratulations to you on your assumption of the post of President, and to assure you of our total co-operation with you. We also wish to welcome His Excellency Dr. Velayati, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who has been kind enough to address the Conference; we listened to what he had to say with the greatest attention.

Our Conference, under your leadership, has embarked on the third month of its work, work which, it seems to us, has from the very outset been intensive, concrete and perhaps rather more imbued with the pragmatism which we already detected in the last session and which is now taking more shape. We were immediately able without a hitch to get the working bodies for the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament and Radiological Weapons back to work. We were able to undertake many consultations and fruitful contacts. We were able to re-establish, without wasting too much time and finally in a spirit of mutual understanding, the Outer Space Committee and, in particular, we were able to maintain and develop the fast pace which the Conference managed to impart over the last few months and, in particular, during the intersessional period to the work of the Committee on Chemical Weapons. My delegation is very pleased with this.

The Conference on Disarmament could hardly do its job, which is to bring 40 countries together to negotiate disarmament agreements of universal scope, if its state of mind is not solidly anchored in the realities of the worldwide balance of power and if its efforts are not at all times directed towards the convergence of the main political forces. Such, at least, is the firm belief of my delegation.

After 25 years -- for it is quite true, as has already been recalled here, that for 25 years now this Conference, whether in another guise or with a different membership, has been pursuing disarmament -- after 25 years, this is a truth we must recognize: no progress is possible in our work unless the

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vital interests of the main protagonists allow it. That is why our Conference is so careful to observe how relations are developing between the two super-Powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, and is ready to pounce on the least statement, the slightest hint in this relationship suggesting favourable signs or harbingers of possible progress towards the final aim of a world where peace can be lastingly guaranteed by effective, verified disarmament.

The Geneva and Reykjavik summits and the various statements which followed them, the developments in the bilateral disarmament negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union and the recent proposals on that subject are all factors whose impact is in the final analysis decisive and determines the way our work progresses.

We must fully grasp the possibilities of progress they offer, although these possibilities vary depending on whether we are talking about nuclear weapons, chemical weapons or outer space, the three major areas on which our concerns are focussed at present.

The current process of negotiation on chemical weapons is the best illustration of the success which the Conference can attain when it is in tune with the basic concerns of the major Powers.

Here my delegation would like to pay tribute to the former Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, Ambassador Cromartie of the United Kingdom, and to the present chairman, Ambassador Ekéus of Sweden, for so capably catching this favourable tide in order to speed up and intensify the work of the Committee and its working groups and thus quickly resolve a number of issues and open up prospects for settling many others.

Thus, the principles of on-site verification of the destruction of chemical weapons and of the destruction of production facilities for such weapons have for the first time been set down in the draft treaty.

In the field of challenge inspection, so crucial for the safety of the future convention, the negotiations have taken what we feel to be a promising turn, bearing in mind the earlier fundamental conflicts of views. In particular, the United Kingdom proposal contained in document CD/715 contributed to this favourable development which we hope will continue in the future. There seems to be a more widespread feeling that an ambitious solution is both necessary and attainable. Success in such an unprecedented undertaking as the verified elimination of a whole category of arms justifies unprecedented remedies. Belgium's preference goes to a set of rules which will be no less stringent in the constraints imposed upon any party faced with a request for inspection than the other obligations contained in the convention. Here we must avoid any discrimination amongst the parties depending on the importance of their military or economic potential, the size of their territory or any other reason. An important question facing us all is whether it can be left to a State party, whichever State party it may be, to determine in the final analysis whether a facility located on its territory comes under the convention or not.

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In the field of the verification of non-production of chemical weapons, article 6, we have managed to lay the foundations of three verification régimes with lists of products whose production, processing and international trade would be subject to international verification. These are either well-known chemical warfare agents, such as choking agents, blister agents, blood agents, incapacitants or nerve gases, or their key precursors. Some of these products have peaceful applications and are produced by industry for that purpose. We have started to recognize the legitimacy of peaceful industrial activities relating to those chemical products which have a dual purpose and which in some countries are or have been used for armaments purposes. We are especially pleased at this shift towards what we feel to be common sense, which was indeed something whose slow pace was a source of concern to us.

My delegation has very frequently repeated here that total, permanent and verifiable elimination of chemical weapons is one of the main priorities for Belgium in the field of disarmament. His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran has again this morning illustrated the acute, urgent human, moral and political necessity of this by referring to facts which we cannot but condemn categorically.

Belgium would like to see the convention concluded without delay. My country will spare no effort to achieve this, and is happy that its representatives currently have the opportunity of making a specific contribution to this goal, by chairing the working group dealing with chemical disarmament proper, i.e. the elimination of chemical weapons and their production facilities, whose work seems to be promising.

It is our belief that if the Conference manages to maintain the present transparency of the negotiations, the conclusion of a chemical disarmament convention is something we can achieve much sooner than might have been thought.

The realism which is so beneficial in the negotiations on chemical weapons has not been lacking in the Conference in the second area of its concerns, outer space.

By its conquest of space, the world has entered a new dimension, as we know, a new technological dimension for which there is no going back, with dazzling advances for the greater good of mankind, but a concomitant train of much-heightened dangers, new threats of destruction, weapons of unprecedented accuracy and range.

The world must start policing outer space before it is too late. It must establish a code of conduct to protect mankind from the new dangers which tomorrow will become a reality, but it must also fully provide for the security of States in and from outer space which at the moment is becoming part of the Earth's living space.

To try to stop progress in science and technology in this area is neither realistic nor useful. It would be wiser to try to channel it. The Conference has understood that time must not be wasted and that it is more important to embark on matters immediately in an appropriate working group than to waste

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energy on the pursuit of promises or commitments to negotiate which are quite obviously unrealistic at present. My delegation is pleased at this pragmatic approach, and we expect that the work of the Committee under the enlightened Chairmanship of Ambassador Pugliese will make a valuable contribution both to initiating its own work and to the work of the Conference as a whole.

We are pleased to note the seminar on problems relating to outer space to be held in May in Montreal, and here we would like to express our warm appreciation and thanks to the delegation of Canada and to the host Government of Canada for this especially interesting initiative.

The sense of realism, which is present in our minds when it is beneficial to us, should not abandon us when it leads to disappointments and invites us to be patient. Here I am referring to nuclear disarmament. Last year my delegation had to face the fact that the essential conditions for true multilateral negotiations in the field of nuclear disarmament were not yet satisfied and that the essential task of the Conference should therefore be situated at a more preliminary stage, namely the preparation of future negotiations, in order to clear the way for effective agreement when the necessary conditions allow. My delegation had suggested that work of this sort be conducted in depth and in a structured way within specific working bodies, with terms of reference that should be as simple as possible, drafted in such a way as to avoid conditions and without prejudging the finality of the work. At this moment we must acknowledge the same state of affairs and advocate the same conduct.

The announcement of bilateral negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States of America on medium-range missiles does, we feel, open up new prospects.

If, as we hope in Belgium, these negotiations produce results, the first important step will have been made towards the reduction of forces. A balanced reduction of strategic arsenals on the part of the two super-Powers would also lead the world towards greater stability without thereby upsetting the balance of power. In this context, the question of the cessation of nuclear tests might take on a new, more realistic dimension. Of course, only a treaty concluded in due form on the complete cessation of all nuclear tests, a binding legal instrument together with a complete verification system, could give us satisfaction. But if, considering the present situation, a total stoppage of nuclear tests is not foreseeable in the short term, the present circumstances, if confirmed, might militate in favour of the idea of a limitation of tests, of a programme cut back to the bare minimum which the nuclear military Powers, starting with the two super-Powers, could agree upon, as was proposed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Mr. Tindemans, at the last session of the United Nations General Assembly, last November.

My delegation believes that it is important to recall here this possibility of adopting a gradual approach. We are aware that bilateral contacts are taking place between the super-Powers on the cessation of nuclear tests. We welcome these contacts, which will necessarily have an impact on our work. In the meantime, and by way of anticipation, my delegation would favour the immediate establishment of a working body with an uncontroversial

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mandate, that is to say, whose terms of reference would not attempt, directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to impose something which my delegation and others feel, quite legitimately, is at present inappropriate.

To begin the consideration of the cessation of nuclear tests is undoubtedly the most topical and the thorny problem which is facing the Conference in the field of nuclear weapons. It is a matter of satisfaction that the question of nuclear disarmament as a whole, the reasons for it, the means to achieve it, the conditions for it and the risks inherent in it, will soon be cast in a basic document which the Ad Hoc Committee on the CPD is at present putting the final touches to, under the Chairmanship of Ambassador García Robles. We do hope that before the end of this session we will finally have in our hands a specific flexible programme, approved by consensus, for progressive steps towards general and complete disarmament -- the fruit of years of long and wise reflection.

On the subject of radiological weapons, my delegation wishes to reiterate here the position it has always advocated, namely that nothing should delay the conclusion of a disarmament convention on radiological weapons, the objective of which must remain distinct from a ban on attacks on nuclear facilities, all the more so as the conditions for negotiating the latter do not yet exist.

That is a brief overview of the problems facing us as my delegation sees them. I hope that I will have occasion to come back to them in greater detail at a later stage.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Belgium, Ambassador Clerckx, for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the President. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other representative wish to take the floor? I see none.

As members know, I have been conducting consultations on the question of finding an appropriate organizational framework to deal with the substance of agenda item 2, entitled "Cessation of the Nuclear Arms Race and Nuclear Disarmament". In that connection, I wish to inform you that, if agreement is reached on the format to proceed with that agenda item, I will put the results of those consultations before the Conference for decision at our next plenary meeting on Tuesday, 14 April. In the meantime, I should like to announce tentatively in advance that, if the Conference so decides at that plenary meeting, then a first informal meeting on the substance of agenda item 2 would be held on Thursday, 16 April, in the morning, immediately after the plenary meeting scheduled for that date. At the opening of that informal meeting, I will inform members of how I intend to proceed in the exercise of the normal functions of the presiding officer, as envisaged in rule 11 of the rules of procedure.

With this clarification, I now put before the Conference the timetable of meetings to be held by the Conference and its subsidiary bodies next week. As usual, the timetable is indicative and subject to change, if necessary. You will notice that, as announced at our last plenary meeting, there are no activities planned for Friday, 17 April, when the United Nations Office at Geneva will be closed. Of course, depending on the decision which the

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Conference might take at our plenary meeting next Tuesday, the informal meeting on the substance of agenda item 2 might be added. If there is no objection, I shall consider that the Conference adopts the timetable.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: As there is no other business to consider, I will now adjourn the plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Tuesday, 14 April, at 10 a.m. The plenary meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.