

# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.1118  
20 January 2009

ENGLISH

---

## FINAL RECORD OF THE ONE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Tuesday, 20 January 2009, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Le Hoai TRUNG (Viet Nam)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 1118th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. As we begin this 2009 session of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to bid a belated farewell to our colleagues who have left the Conference since we adjourned in September last year, namely, Ambassador Aleinik of Belarus, Ambassador Costea of Romania, Ambassador Bersheda of Ukraine and Ambassador Rocca of the United States of America. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to request the respective delegations to convey to them our deep appreciation for their valuable contribution to the work of the Conference during their tenure, as well as our sincere wishes for success in their new assignments. Allow me also to extend a most cordial welcome to new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments to the Conference, namely, Ambassador Badr of Egypt, Ambassador Himanen of Finland, Ambassador Manfredi of Italy, Ambassador Hilale of Morocco, Ambassador Akram of Pakistan, Ambassador Garrigues of Spain and Ambassador Jamal of Tunisia. I would like to take this opportunity to assure all of them of our full cooperation and support in their new assignments.

Viet Nam is very honoured to assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, the body which was mandated by the entire membership of the United Nations to serve as the single multilateral disarmament forum and has indeed delivered significant results. Viet Nam takes the task seriously out of its commitment as a member State and on the basis of its foreign policy of independence, peace, cooperation and development. It is the consistent policy of Viet Nam to strive for peace, prevention of war and promotion of disarmament and international security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The advancement of these issues is of immense importance to the primary objectives of Viet Nam's foreign policy, namely, maintaining a peaceful environment and creating other favourable international conditions for the unfolding cause of reform, socio-economic development and industrialization and modernization in Viet Nam. It is also rooted in the ardent desire for peace of the Vietnamese people, who were victims of destructive wars and still have to deal with many consequences of war.

Viet Nam's commitment to peace and disarmament is displayed, among other things, in its concrete contribution to the efforts for peace, friendship and cooperation in South-East Asia, including those within the framework of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, in interregional settings such as through the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and at the United Nations Security Council, where Viet Nam is serving as a non-permanent member. Viet Nam is a party to all the agreements negotiated by the Conference on Disarmament and its preceding bodies; most recently, in 2006, the President of Viet Nam signed the ratification instrument of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. In 2007, Viet Nam concluded with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) the Additional Protocol to its Nuclear Safeguards Agreement. Viet Nam has also scrupulously complied with the agreements to which it is a party.

We are all aware that the Conference on Disarmament has not obtained a result from its negotiating mandate over the last decade. One of the causes of that stalemate can be determined on the basis of the finding that we have all shared, that is that disarmament, respect for self-determination and national independence, the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance

(The President)

with the Charter of the United Nations and the strengthening of international peace and security are directly related to each other. At the same time, we are all aware that the Conference on Disarmament needs to be able to play its important role for us to promote our security and development interests in face of both the enduring traditional security challenges and the emerging, new challenges arising from new complications regarding proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism or energy security, food security and climate change. Progress in the work of the Conference on Disarmament is essential to the promotion of multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The ongoing financial crisis and economic recession in many countries should only accentuate the pressing need to enhance efforts towards a safer world where more resources can be used for economic and development purposes.

In the preparations for Viet Nam's presidency during the 2009 session of the Conference, the delegation of Viet Nam has conducted extensive consultations in Geneva and in New York in the margins of the meetings of the First Committee, with member States, my predecessors of last year, the other Presidents of the Conference during the following periods of this year, Regional Coordinators and the secretariat, headed by Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference. We are grateful to all of them for the constructive and extremely useful exchange of views as well as the support that they have kindly reserved for us. The most pronounced message that we have got from these consultations is the enormous importance that all member States attach to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. There is general agreement about the items on the agenda for the 2009 session and we hope that the draft agenda will be adopted later in due course after the informal meeting to be held shortly. There is also substantial interest in the preparation of a programme of work for the Conference and a number of delegations suggest that further consultations be held on this issue.

In its capacity as President of the Conference, Viet Nam will work with all countries and the secretariat in a constructive, cooperative, open and transparent spirit in the consideration of items on the agenda-to-be and the promotion of the organization of the work of the Conference. In this, we wish to have the precious support of all countries and also of the secretariat.

I would now like to invite the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, to deliver a message addressed to the Conference by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): It is an honour and a pleasure for me to deliver a message on behalf of the Secretary-General to the Conference on Disarmament.

The message reads as follows:

“It is a pleasure to send greetings to the Conference on Disarmament. As you know, one of my personal priorities since my first day in office has been to revitalize the international disarmament agenda and strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations

Mr. Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference  
on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the  
Secretary-General of the United Nations)

itself in this area. I therefore attach great importance to your work and to the wide-ranging efforts of governments, citizens' groups and activists throughout the world in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. From conventional weapons and small arms to weapons of mass destruction, the risks are clear. I remain committed to using every opportunity, in my meetings with government leaders and my outreach to civil society, to forge partnerships and mobilize action. I look forward to continuing this work with you in 2009.

The immediate task before the Conference is to convert your discussions on procedure into practical negotiations that will lead to real disarmament. At a time of global economic and financial crisis, advancing the disarmament agenda could produce a tangible peace dividend when the world needs it most. The Charter of the United Nations calls for 'the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources'. If we are to deliver on the Millennium Development Goals in a deteriorating economic climate, all United Nations Member States must be mindful of this solemn responsibility.

There have been promising signs in recent months, including important initiatives by the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, Russia, the European Union, the non-aligned countries and other governments. Civil society continues to generate visibility and support. The United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament should seize this moment and be in the vanguard of efforts towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

Last October, I issued a five-point proposal to revitalize the international disarmament agenda. Included in this proposal were several specific contributions that could be made by the Conference on Disarmament with respect to nuclear disarmament and fissile materials. Indeed, this Conference and its predecessors have an impressive record of achievement, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. These instruments demonstrate the potential of the Conference.

For two consecutive years, a proposal to begin substantive work on four core issues - nuclear disarmament, fissile materials, security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space - has been at the centre of your deliberations. The Conference has come very close to agreeing to this proposal.

Your recent discussions have had many positive features. These discussions, however, cannot substitute for negotiations. I urge you once again to overcome the deadlock and reach a consensus on an agenda that will permit the resumption of substantive work. I also call on you to intensify your efforts on measures that have already been the subject of your deliberations, including new bans on weapons such as missiles and space weapons. The Conference is a unique multilateral negotiating forum, and must be able to play its proper role.

Mr. Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

For my part, I remain strongly committed to global disarmament and will continue to support your efforts to build a better, more prosperous and more peaceful world for all.

Please accept my best wishes for a successful session.”

That was the end of the message of the Secretary-General that he asked me to deliver to the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank Mr. Ordzhonikidze for delivering the important message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. I would now like to ask Mr. Ordzhonikidze to convey to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization our appreciation for his personal support to the Conference and for the importance he attaches to our work.

Now I intend to suspend the plenary meeting and would like the Conference to consider in an informal meeting, which will follow immediately after this, the draft agenda for the 2009 session, as contained in document CD/WP.552, as well as the requests we have received from States not members of the Conference to participate in our work this session, as contained in CD/WP.551. Thereafter, we shall resume the plenary meeting in order to finalize the agreements we have made at the informal plenary. I would like to remind you that the formal meeting is open to the member States of the Conference. The plenary is suspended for five minutes, so we are going to resume in five minutes to have the informal plenary.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.30 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: At the informal meeting that we have just concluded, we reached agreement on the draft agenda. May I take it that the Conference decides to adopt for its 2009 session the agenda contained in document CD/WP.552, which is before you?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This agenda will be issued as an official document of the Conference by the secretariat.

Now I would like to deliver the following statement:

“In connection with the adoption of the agenda, I, as the President of the Conference, should like to state that it is my understanding that if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with within this agenda. The Conference will also take into consideration rules 27 and 30 of the rules of procedure of the Conference.”

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): Mr. President, I am sorry to interrupt, but I think that it is important that the outside world, as far as it is possible, knows a little bit about what we are doing. You have suspended the meeting for an informal meeting which apparently the civil

(Mr. Landman, Netherlands)

society audience thought maybe was for ages and they have perhaps gone home. I am not sure. Or they are still waiting. I think it would be wise if someone of the secretariat checks and tells them we have resumed our official session and that they are allowed to be here. I would appreciate that very much.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank the distinguished delegate from the Netherlands and have duly noted your request.

Are there any other comments? If that is not the case, I would like to ask you kindly to take a decision on the requests for participation in our work from States not members of the Conference. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.551 and they have been received from the following States: Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, the Holy See, Kuwait, Latvia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritius, Montenegro, Nepal, the Philippines, Qatar, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovenia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: At this time, I would like to turn to the list of speakers for today. The following delegations have requested the floor: Algeria on behalf of the Group of 21, the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union, Australia, Belarus on behalf of the Eastern European Group, Egypt and the Russian Federation.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Idriss Jazairy of Algeria.

Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria): Mr. President, at the outset, on behalf of the delegations of the Group of 21 to the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to congratulate you most warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of our support and cooperation in your endeavours to move the Conference forward. We also very much appreciated the inspiring statement that both you yourself and the distinguished Secretary-General read on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General and which were both addressed to us on this auspicious occasion.

May I emphasize how much the Group of 21 looks forward to a fruitful 2009 session of the Conference? We commend you for the efforts you have made in the past few months to meet a large number of the member States with the aim of exploring common ground on the programme of work and to bridge the gaps on the important issues pertaining to the Conference's work. We are convinced that your hard work will lead our discussions to a successful beginning for this year's work. The Group of 21, consisting mainly of the countries of the developing world,

(Mr. Jazairy, Algeria)

attaches great importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. This unique role should always be preserved. In this regard, it is our sincere hope that the Conference will start its substantial negotiations on the basis of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work as soon as possible and thus regain its active role. Our Group believes in multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions as the basis of any negotiations which might be undertaken in this forum. We believe that, through mutual respect and good will, the member States will be able to reach the consensus needed for providing the Conference on Disarmament with a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, allowing it to meet the tasks entrusted to it by the international community. Allow me to express once again our readiness to make our sustained contribution to this end and also to wish you every success in guiding the work of the Conference at this particular juncture, as well as creating the needed momentum to move this important forum out of its long-standing stalemate.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Idriss Jazairy, who has spoken on behalf of the Group of 21, for the statement that he has made and for the very kind words that he addressed to me and my delegation. I now give the floor to Ambassador Tomáš Husák of the Czech Republic, who is going to speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. HUSÁK (Czech Republic): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

Since this is the first time I am taking the floor, Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on the assumption of the post of the first President of the Conference on Disarmament during its 2009 session. I would like to assure you and the other P6 presidencies chairing the Conference on Disarmament during 2009 of my full personal support and the support of the European Union in your efforts to guide the work of this Conference and to overcome its long-standing impasse. I would furthermore like to commend you for the successful adoption of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament for this annual session.

The European Union highly values the system of work of the P6 presidencies during the last three years. This system considerably contributed to progress in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. The European Union welcomes the fact that this model of close and continuous coordination among the presidents of the annual session with consultations as broad as possible has become the established practice now.

The European Union is convinced that the 2008 session of the Conference on Disarmament marked a degree of progress. The six presidencies in 2008, namely Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Venezuela, steered the work of the Conference in a very competent way. In this context, I would like to thank on behalf of the European Union all seven coordinators - Ambassador Martabit of

(Mr. Husák, Czech Republic)

Chile, Ambassador Tarui of Japan, Ambassador Grinius of Canada, Ambassador Mbaye of Senegal, Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria, Ambassador Jayatilleka of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Wesaka Puja of Indonesia - for their valuable work. In March 2008, the P6 proposed the adoption of the programme of work, which represents an important attempt to move the Conference's work forward in a concrete manner.

Allow me to underline once again the importance the European Union attaches to the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral forum at the disposal of the international community for global negotiations in the field of disarmament. The European Union has been working consistently on the adoption of a programme of work and has come up with concrete proposals in this regard. We will spare no efforts to revitalize this unique forum in order to resume negotiations and substantive work.

I would like to recall that the European Union has proposed a clear direction by presenting the United Nations General Assembly at its current session with concrete and realistic disarmament initiatives:

- The universal ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the completion of its verification regime, and the dismantling as soon as possible of all nuclear testing facilities in a manner that is transparent and open to the international community
- The opening without delay and without preconditions of negotiations for a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, and the introduction of an immediate moratorium on the production of such material
- The establishment of transparency and confidence-building measures by the nuclear Powers
- Further progress in the current discussions between the United States and Russia on the development of a legally binding post-START arrangement, and an overall reduction in the global stockpile of nuclear weapons in accordance with article VI of the NPT, in particular by the States which possess the largest arsenals
- The inclusion of tactical nuclear weapons, by those States which have them, in their general arms control and disarmament processes, with a view to their reduction and elimination
- The start of consultations on a treaty banning short- and intermediate-range ground-to-ground missiles
- Adherence to and implementation by all of the Hague Code of Conduct
- Mobilization in all other areas of disarmament



(Mr. Husák, Czech Republic)

Several of these initiatives are relevant to the Conference on Disarmament. The European Union attaches a clear priority to the negotiation, without preconditions, in the Conference on Disarmament, of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as a means to strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation. It constitutes a priority ripe for negotiation. The European Union is also ready to engage in substantial discussion on the other items included in CD/1840: nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war, issues related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space and appropriate international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as issues related to the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

The European Union would go along with the proposal in document CD/1840, which constitutes a balanced compromise that we believe takes into account the views of all parties and should be acceptable to them. The European Union appeals to all delegations of the Conference on Disarmament to show flexibility and to make consensus possible on the basis of this proposal.

The European Union wishes success to the 2009 P6 (namely, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Argentina, Australia and Austria). As in past years, we will continuously support all efforts that can lead to a breakthrough, the adoption of the work programme and the resumption of negotiations and substantive work.

Lastly, the European Union would like to remind you of our long-standing attachment to the enlargement process of the Conference on Disarmament, in particular to those member States of the European Union which are not yet members of the Conference on Disarmament but which have already submitted their formal requests for membership.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Tomáš Husák of the Czech Republic, who has spoken on behalf of the European Union, for his statement and for his kind words of support and cooperation. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Australia, Ambassador Caroline Millar.

Ms. MILLAR (Australia): Mr. President, the Australian delegation warmly congratulates you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and on a personal note can I say that as someone with a long-standing association with your country, it gives me particular pleasure to see you in the Chair.

As one of your fellow Presidents for 2009, we look forward to working constructively and collegially with you and with all P6 colleagues to make this year as productive as possible for the Conference. I should like to thank you and your colleagues for the thorough and professional consultations Viet Nam has undertaken to prepare for the presidency - both with all CD member States and with the other P6.

At the beginning of each year, Australia - along with the overwhelming majority of delegations - has strongly urged the Conference to agree on its programme of work and start

(Ms. Millar, Australia)

substantive negotiations. We supported the draft decision of the Presidents in 2008, CD/1840, which set out a good basis to move forward. We remain supportive of this proposal and we thank the 2008 P6 and the facilitators on the specific issues for their excellent efforts to guide our work during last year.

But, despite widespread support for work along these lines, despite the identification of much common ground over the past few years and despite constructive, detailed and useful discussions on many issues, agreement - even to begin negotiations - has proved elusive. While disappointing, this is not necessarily surprising: attitudes towards negotiations on specific issues reflect the diverse national security interests of CD members and strategic realities and perceptions.

In the light of this, it has long seemed to us that external policy shifts would be required to break the deadlock and get the CD back to work.

Over the past few years, the nuclear disarmament debate has become more dynamic, as demonstrated by newspaper and journal articles by experts and former policymakers and at academic and government-sponsored conferences. But increasingly and more importantly, we are seeing signs of movement by key current and incoming policymakers. We welcome, in this context, the significant European Union proposals on nuclear disarmament set out by President Sarkozy last December and reiterated this morning by the Czech presidency. And we are particularly encouraged by the statements made by United States Secretary of State-designate Clinton at her Senate confirmation hearings last week on the commitment of the incoming United States Administration to "set a new direction in nuclear weapons policy ...". Of particular relevance to this forum were her stated commitments to securing United States Senate approval of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty and to a diplomatic effort to bring the Treaty into force, as well as, significantly, to negotiating a verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty.

We hope these external policy shifts will indeed help break the deadlock and get the CD back to work. From Australia's national perspective, and as we have stated many times in this forum, a key priority - and one that is very widely shared - will be to commence negotiations on an FMCT.

Australia remains strongly committed to nuclear disarmament. That was why Australian Prime Minister Rudd, along with the then Japanese Prime Minister Aso, decided to establish an International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament last year. The Commission will seek to break existing stalemates and restate the case for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in ways that are compelling for political decision makers. In response to interest from many members of this Conference, Commission members will brief the CD later in the year.

As one of your fellow Presidents in 2009, Australia is at your disposal and at the disposal of all CD members to do all we can to get the CD back to work and ensure it fulfils its potential as a vitally important disarmament negotiating body.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Millar for her statement, the kind words on the relations between Viet Nam and Australia and the support extended to our delegation in preparation of this presidency. Now I would like to give the floor to the distinguished representative of Belarus, Mr. Andrei Savinykh, who will speak on behalf of the Eastern European Group.

Mr. SAVINYKH (Belarus) (spoke in Russian): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Eastern European group, composed of Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Romania, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus.

Allow me first of all, Sir, to welcome you and congratulate you on taking up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to assure you of the confidence which the delegations of the Eastern European group have in you and your fellow Presidents for this year, the Ambassadors of Zimbabwe, Algeria, Argentina, Australia and Austria. We express warm greetings to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, who has just read a very important message to the Conference from the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon. The message to the Conference from the United Nations Secretary-General is of particular significance in terms of emphasizing the Conference's role as the world's only multilateral forum on issues of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We are opening the new Conference session with a feeling of hope that the Conference's work will be given a new stimulus and new energy in order to accomplish its principal purpose, that of holding practical negotiations. The Eastern European group is convinced that in 2009 the Conference should draw on all of the positive legacy of its work in previous years. We should focus our attention on all the constructive initiatives that have been submitted for consideration by the Conference, and develop them further. This especially relates to the Presidents' paper issued in 2008 (CD/1840), which contains balanced proposals for beginning the substantive work of the Conference. The Eastern European group continues to view this proposal as offering common ground where the positions of all the delegations could come together. In this connection the Eastern European group will be ready to support consensus on CD/1840 or on any other future document based on it, with modifications that strengthen and improve it.

We believe that the effective leadership of the six Presidents, coupled with a responsible and flexible approach on the part of all member States, will allow us to draw the Conference out of deadlock and onto a smooth path. It is up to us and you whether we can make use of this opportunity and begin to eliminate the threats and challenges to security and disarmament which are facing the international community today.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Andrei Savinykh for the statement that he has made on behalf of the Eastern European group and for the kind words he addressed to me. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Egypt, Ambassador Hisham Badr.

Mr. BADR (Egypt): Mr. President, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of Egypt's continued readiness to fully support all serious efforts that aim to reactivate the work of the Conference. My country remains determined to provide a constructive contribution in order to help foster a positive outcome for this year's session. Egypt also associates itself fully with the statement delivered by the Ambassador of Algeria on behalf of the G21. As this is also the first time for me personally to address this esteemed body, permit me to extend my personal regards to you, Mr. President, and to the honourable Ambassadors and members of the Conference. I look forward to working with you closely during the coming period.

The need for an active and effective Conference on Disarmament is not a luxury, but a necessity, through which international peace and security can be effectively enhanced. It is important to highlight here that nuclear disarmament must remain the top priority of the Conference, in accordance with the special status allocated to it in the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly for disarmament, SSOD-1.

The urgency for effective disarmament and arms control measures is felt very clearly in our region of the Middle East, where very well-known dynamics can often result in conflicts spinning dangerously and rapidly out of control. The importance of working effectively towards creating a Middle East that is free from nuclear weapons, in order to mitigate against the risks of seeing regional conflicts becoming global calamities, must therefore remain, until fulfilled, a matter of utmost international importance. It is noteworthy to mention that positive progress in that regard would undoubtedly also constitute a positive influence upon resolving ongoing regional conflicts in the Middle East and certainly assist in defusing tensions that have global implications.

The recent Israeli aggression on Gaza should serve as an acute reminder of the ripple effect that such wars have upon regional arms races in the Middle East, especially when combined with the fact that Israel is the only State in the region that is as yet not a party to the NPT. The destabilizing influences of such actions are far-reaching and should serve as a strong impetus to achieve positive results during this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament, particularly with regard to nuclear disarmament.

It is our firm belief that the continued stagnation of the Conference on Disarmament can be attributed to one main underlying factor - a deficit in the political will of certain States to achieve tangible outcomes based upon previously agreed-upon objectives. It is imperative to highlight here that efforts geared towards overcoming the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament through a selective, piecemeal approach to disarmament that does not take into consideration the concerns of all member States cannot be considered as a basis for moving forward. Adopting by consensus an appropriate, balanced and comprehensive programme of work that takes into account the legitimate interests of all parties concerned is what is needed to break the current stalemate.

(Mr. Badr, Egypt)

Honouring prior commitments, equally respecting the concerns of member States, and utilizing a transparent, balanced and inclusive approach that adheres to the adopted rules of procedure are all pillars upon which the success of the Conference on Disarmament, as a multilateral body, can be realistically based. Formulas that ignore such pillars only serve to divert the focus of this august body and create the illusion of motion to satisfy narrow political interests, while in reality the stagnation of the Conference on Disarmament is allowed to deepen.

Egypt fully supports adopting a programme of work by consensus that would establish ad hoc committees as negotiating subsidiary bodies of the Conference for the four core issues, namely, nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, prevention of an arms race in outer space and a fissile material cut-off treaty. Furthermore, and insofar as the FMCT is concerned, the mandate for negotiation has to adhere to progress already achieved more than a decade ago. Document CD/1299 of 1995 clearly indicates that such a treaty must be non-discriminatory, multilateral, and internationally and effectively verifiable, and that it does not preclude any delegation from raising for consideration the issue of existing stockpiles. Egypt stands ready to fully and immediately support a programme of work that takes such matters effectively into consideration. It is important to highlight that any exchange of views that may take place throughout this year's session that is not held within the framework of an agreed programme of work is informal in nature, and while such informal discussions can have their benefits, their outcome is in no way binding, nor can it serve as an official basis for future work.

The year 2009 is a crucial year for global disarmament efforts, and the challenges facing us are grave indeed. The third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference will be held in just under four months from today, and it is no secret that the outcome of that meeting will be pivotal in determining the continued credibility and indeed viability of the NPT. Again, how the 1995 Middle East resolution is handled will certainly be one of several key yardsticks against which the success or failure of the current review process will be evaluated. It is worthwhile highlighting that Egypt submitted a working paper in that regard during the second PrepCom containing suggestions on how to move forward.

Our success in the Conference on Disarmament is a crucial factor that can help set the stage for a positive Review Conference. Indeed, it is noteworthy that the nuclear disarmament plan of action adopted as part of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference urges the Conference on Disarmament to take action on several fronts as a means towards achieving global nuclear disarmament efforts. We can no longer afford to disregard such matters, nor can we continue to allow the Conference on Disarmament to sit idly by as global events and double standards risk destabilizing the international nuclear non-proliferation regime we all worked so hard to develop.

In conclusion, allow me to state that despite the challenges we face I am optimistic that we can, together, achieve our objectives. This optimism is not born out of false hope. It is grounded in the knowledge that our objectives are common. We all agree that the Conference on Disarmament must be revitalized; we all agree that complete and total nuclear disarmament is a

(Mr. Badr, Egypt)

necessity; we all agree that the proliferation and use of nuclear weapons is unacceptable. What remains is mapping out the path that will lead us to achieve our objectives, and while this is undoubtedly not an easy undertaking, it is certainly possible, and that is what the Conference on Disarmament, as the world's sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, was created to realize.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Badr, for the statement that you have just made and also for the kind words you addressed to the Chair and your support for the work of the Conference. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Valery Loshchinin.

Mr. LOSHCININ (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): Thank you, Mr. President, and allow me to welcome you to the Chair. We are pleased to see the representative of the friendly country of Viet Nam in this position of responsibility. You can always count on unwavering support and cooperation in your activities from the delegation of the Russian Federation.

We would like to express appreciation to the six Presidents for 2008 for their efforts to make progress. We hope that the six Presidents for 2009 will also make a substantive contribution to the work of the Conference.

We are beginning our work this year in a complex period. The international community and our forum face extremely acute problems. Indeed, the worsening of regional crises, terrorist threats, the growing risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, stagnation in the disarmament field - these all endanger international stability and divert resources away from constructive ends, preventing the achievement of steady economic growth and also preventing a solution to the global financial and economic crisis.

The focus of our delegation's work is to contribute to overcoming the deadlock in multilateral disarmament, to preserve stability and to strengthen the international legal basis for disarmament and non-proliferation, to ensure strict compliance with existing agreements on arms control and draw up new ones, with the United Nations playing a central role.

One of the most important tasks of our forum is to promote the strengthening of international security through the adoption of practical measures in the field of disarmament. And here the world faces a number of highly acute challenges. The most striking example is the situation in the Middle East. On 16 January in New York at the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on the Middle East, a resolution was adopted on the crisis around Gaza. The resolution received the support of the overwhelming majority of the Members of the United Nations. In this way, the General Assembly followed the Security Council in clearly confirming the position of the international community in favour of the urgent need to untangle the crisis in Gaza. From the very beginning of the armed confrontation in Gaza, Russia has steadfastly pursued one principal aim - to stop the bloodshed, loss of life and suffering of

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

peaceful Palestinians as quickly as possible. We have also spoken out against the missile attacks on Israeli territory which have led to loss of life among civilians in Israel. We welcome the ceasefire declared by Israel as well as "Hamas". We believe that the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza sector will be an important factor on the path towards a political settlement in the Middle East, as provided for in Security Council resolution 1860 of 8 January this year. Russia will continue to do everything in its power at the regional and international levels in order to promote a shift in the situation in the Middle East towards a political settlement.

However, systemic breakdowns in assuring security are unfortunately characteristic of other regions too, including Europe. All of this, as well as the events in the Caucasus in August last year, has demonstrated in particular the lack of effectiveness of existing mechanisms for security and transparency in arms transfers, and confirmed the relevance of the idea of a new treaty on European security as proposed by the President of Russia, D. Medvedev. The contemporary Euro-Atlantic world needs a positive agenda. The implementation of this Russian initiative will make it possible to create a single reliable system of comprehensive security in the Euro-Atlantic area. Adapting the European security system to new realities needs to be speeded up. The only alternative is further deterioration, a worsening crisis in the area of security and in the area of arms control.

The main purpose of the Russian initiative is to codify the principle of the indivisibility of security: no one must ensure his or her own security at the expense of the security of others. The treaty could include the following elements: embodiment in legally binding form of previously agreed principles in the area of Euro-Atlantic security; development of instruments and mechanisms for the practical implementation of those principles; review of the arms control situation; strengthening of the regimes for the non-proliferation of WMDs; and other elements. We are open to discussion with interested delegations of these and other possible elements of such a future treaty.

Without a doubt, stepping up work on real disarmament issues would strengthen strategic stability and international security. Russia is committed to the multilateral approach for resolving issues of non-proliferation, arms control, disarmament and confidence-building. We believe that more active use must be made of the potential of the Conference on Disarmament to promote and strengthen the global regime for the non-proliferation of WMDs and for disarmament.

The cornerstone of this architecture for us is the strengthening of the NPT, making it more effective, making it universal. New challenges to the nuclear non-proliferation regime must be dealt with on the basis of the NPT. We are interested in a successful and results-oriented third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The main purpose of the Conference in our view is to develop agreed recommendations capable of ensuring the continued viability of the Treaty, ensuring unconditional compliance with non-proliferation obligations by the parties on the basis of the indivisibility of the three fundamental components of the NPT - non-proliferation, the peaceful use of atomic energy and disarmament.

(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

Russia is taking specific measures to step up the process of nuclear disarmament. Back in 2005 we proposed to the United States of America the drafting of a new full-fledged agreement to replace the START Treaty, which would have made it possible to further limit strategic offensive weapons and would have created an effective mechanism for verifying compliance with the obligations assumed by the parties in strategic arms reduction. We also believe that the implementation of the proposal made by the President of Russia on 12 October 2007 to make the INF Treaty regime a global regime could be an important factor for strengthening international peace and security at both the global and the regional levels.

Russia is committed to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as one of the most important instruments for strengthening the regime for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the limitation of nuclear weapons. Maintaining the moratorium on nuclear tests is important in itself, but it cannot supplant the more urgent task of bringing the CTBT into force as soon as possible. It is of paramount importance to ensure that countries whose accession is needed for the Treaty to enter into force become parties to it. We hope that 2009 will be a year of results in this connection.

It happens that today is a red-letter day in the life of the American people - the day of the inauguration of the new President of the United States, Barack Obama. We express the hope that the new United States Administration will carry out a painstaking review of its foreign policy priorities, including those projects which create serious security problems. I have in mind first and foremost the intention of the previous United States Administration to develop the Third Site of the global American anti-missile defence in Europe and the totally unjustified and destructive desire to expand NATO. It is obvious that this Third Site is capable of disrupting the strategic balance of forces in the world, since strategic offensive and defensive weapons are objectively mutually linked. In a telephone conversation with the newly elected President B. Obama, President D. Medvedev confirmed our intention to develop a full and comprehensive partnership with the United States of America on the basis of equality, recognizing the special responsibility of Russia and the United States of America for ensuring international peace and security. We believe that such a relationship will make it possible to move forward with issues on the agenda of our forum too.

Ensuring security in outer space is a priority issue for Russia in the Conference. The problem of preventing an arms race in outer space has many aspects and many dimensions. A year ago, on 12 February 2008, Russia officially submitted for consideration by the Conference a draft treaty co-sponsored with China on prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects. A series of discussions held on this draft last year in various formats demonstrated the great interest of all delegations without exception in the draft PPWT. Even its main opponents joined in this dialogue. In order to consolidate the progress made last year, we and the delegation of China decided in the intersessional period to reflect the results of the intellectual work that has been done on the draft PPWT in a new Conference document. It will include issues of principle and comments voiced



(Mr. Loshchinin, Russian Federation)

by delegations during the discussions, as well as replies to the various questions supplied by the authors of the draft. We will send the draft to the Conference secretariat in the very near future. We believe that it will provide good reference material for the delegations in the Conference.

Russia is ready to support the initiation of negotiations on a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices under the agenda item "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament" and, of course, in the framework of the Conference's agreed work programme. The drafting of such a treaty would, we believe, be one more multilateral measure in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and consequently a real contribution to strengthening the NPT regime.

We also have no objection to holding, within the Conference's agreed programme of work, substantive discussions on the problem of nuclear disarmament and on prospects for achieving corresponding international agreements on security guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States. We are prepared to participate actively in such discussions.

The agenda we have adopted includes issues which are of continuing relevance for international security, and the course of events in the world has once again borne out that conviction.

Sir, as the first President of the 2009 session of the Conference it falls to you to carry out the difficult duty of preparing the basic blueprint and practical arrangements for the session. Our paramount common goal is to achieve consensus on the programme of work by seeking compromise solutions which are acceptable to all States without exception, and the resumption of the Conference's substantive activities at last. We must put disarmament issues back on the global agenda as rapidly as possible. Together we must all do everything we can to address this issue, and a fundamental step in this direction would be to agree on the Conference's programme of work on the basis of document CD/1840. This is the approach which will guide the Russian delegation.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Loshchinin, for the statement you have just made, which contained very important points related to the work of the Conference, and I would also like to thank you for the kind words about the friendship between the Russian Federation and Viet Nam.

There are also requests for the floor from some other members of the Conference. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Turkey, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü.

Mr. ÜZÜMCÜ (Turkey): Mr. President, my delegation warmly congratulates you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

We also welcome the message of the United Nations Secretary-General read by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Ordzhonikidze.

(Mr. Üzümcü, Turkey)

Turkey considers that the Conference on Disarmament has a leading role in addressing the security challenges confronting our nations. The importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum has been widely recognized. In recent years, considerable momentum has been created within the Conference. However, in spite of many attempts, it has not been possible to overcome the 11-year-long stalemate so that the Conference on Disarmament could fulfil its primary task. We fully agree with proposals underlining the urgent need to reach agreement on a programme of work. Such a consensus in the Conference will confirm our resolve and ability to respond effectively to the most pressing threats to international peace and security. Collective efforts to ensure a safer world rest on multilateral forums, including the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament can play a particular role on nuclear issues. We are of the view that the Conference could start negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material and realize parallel advances on negative security assurances, nuclear disarmament and prevention of an arms race in outer space. The Conference was in the past able to conclude the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which constitutes one of the indispensable components of the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime. We could finalize further instruments to reinforce the NPT. Each member of the Conference has a special responsibility in the wake of the Third Preparatory Committee to be held next May and the 2010 Review Conference.

Indeed, we all need to strive for a new impetus which would allow us to move towards a consensus on our future work, bearing in mind that this may require some more time. In the meantime, we should continue to seek ways to mobilize the necessary consensus by addressing the legitimate security concerns of member States. During the presidency of Turkey a compromise package contained in document CD/1840 was submitted last March on behalf of the 2008 Presidents. This document constitutes a sincere endeavour to initiate an incremental process which could enable us to reach consensus on a programme of work. Turkey continues to hold the view that members of the Conference on Disarmament may wish to build on this document. Hence, we welcome suggestions to concentrate on the four core issues, while keeping an open mind towards other items. The commencement of negotiations in the Conference would provide a much-needed opportunity to demonstrate collective leadership and achieve meaningful gains on disarmament.

Turkey favours global, overall disarmament and supports all efforts in the field of sustaining international security through arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. We are party to all international non-proliferation instruments and export control regimes, and thus support the universalization and effective implementation of these instruments. Located in a region of particular concern with respect to proliferation, Turkey monitors with vigilance the developments in this field and takes part in collective efforts aimed at devising measures to reverse this alarming trend. As a member of the United Nations Security Council for the period 2009-2010, Turkey will spare no efforts to further advance the disarmament and arms control goals of the international community.

To conclude, let me once again express our appreciation for all your efforts and our confidence in Viet Nam as President of this august body. My delegation stands ready to assist you in your endeavours.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Turkey, Mr. Ahmet Üzümcü, for his statement and for the words of support that he expressed. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the efforts that were made by Turkey as President, and also the other Presidents of the 2008 session, as well as the efforts made by the Coordinators appointed by the Presidents to the work of the Conference.

I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Israel, Mr. Meir Itzhaki.

Mr. ITZCHAKI (Israel): Mr. President, at the outset I would also like to join others in commending you on the efforts you have made until now and to wish you all success in your endeavours to bring the Conference back to work. I also wish to congratulate the rest of the P6 in their endeavours and to ensure them of our full cooperation with their endeavours, too.

I did not plan to take the floor, but I just had to respond to a few statements that were made earlier on in relation to the situation in our region. At the outset I would say that we appreciate the constructive role that Egypt played, together with other major States, in brokering the ceasefire in Gaza. We also hope that the ceasefire will be sustainable and that no more provocations on behalf of Hamas, which is known for targeting civilians in the southern part of Israel, would force us to take action to protect our own civilians in the future if we deem it necessary.

What the recent conflict in Gaza shows us and has underlined very clearly is that the threat of arms transfers to terrorists is all too relevant to the work of this Conference. This is the problem that we have to face, and we still expect that our proposals from 2007 and 2008 will find the ways that the Conference on Disarmament can address them, as a matter of priority, as we have proposed in the past.

I do not wish to repeat here the long-standing policy of Israel regarding the establishment of a weapon-free zone in the Middle East. I can only say that we share the objective of the establishment of an eventual nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, and we just wish to underline that this zone, or this vision, cannot be divorced from reality. It cannot be established while threats continue to prevail in our region, in particular the arms transfers to terrorists, as I have mentioned. Terrorist groups in the Middle East are still being supported by other States in the region in clear violation of several United Nations Security Council resolutions adopted under Chapter VII; those same States are also heavily engaged in the proliferation of nuclear weapons and those same States are also parties to the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament has been mute on the suffering of more than 1 million Israeli civilians in the southern part of Israel. For over eight years the Conference on Disarmament has not addressed that, while we have repeatedly spoken of, and underlined the threat. It has also unfortunately been mute on the risks of the proliferation of nuclear weapons that prevail in our region. My question then would be: What more needs to happen in the world in order for the Conference on Disarmament to really shape itself and to address the real threats to international peace and security?

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Israel, Mr. Meir Itzhaki, for his statement. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of our neighbouring country in South-East Asia, and also a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Ambassador Puja of Indonesia.

Mr. PUJA (Indonesia): Mr. President, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. As a fellow member of ASEAN, my delegation is pleased to see you chairing this august body and to assure you of Indonesia's full support and cooperation in the discharge of your difficult and challenging task. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Algeria on behalf of the G21.

Last year was just another year which was similar to previous years whereby we had extensive discussions, but at the end we did not manage to break away from the long impasse. This regrettable and continuous state of affairs compels us to reflect on the rationale of our deliberations all these years. Our objective is to rid the world of the weapons that one day can cause fatal destruction to the very existence of human kind and our entire planet. If this is our common objective, then the responsibility of this forum as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament must be moved forward. There must be some progress in the programme of work. It is too risky to put such a critical task of the Conference on Disarmament in such a stalemate for such a long period of time.

Progress in the Conference on Disarmament will undoubtedly contribute to the pursuance of the noble cause of international peace and security without any threats posed by nuclear weapons to the survival of our civilizations. Hence, any progress made in the Conference on Disarmament would be in everyone's interest. Whatever agreement is reached in the Conference on Disarmament should not reflect the parochial interests of specific countries or groups of countries, but rather the common good and the collective interest of all people. If we do not embrace a common objective to eliminate these weapons once and for all, then we are embarking on another dangerous path, which is to allow nuclear weapons to continue to proliferate both horizontally and vertically, thus increasing the chances that would spawn an arms race and also allow the possibility of these weapons to be used one day with whatever rationale or accidentally, with catastrophic consequences.

We welcome the commitments and unilateral nuclear reduction of nuclear arsenals undertaken by some nuclear-weapon States. We urge them to take further necessary measures towards advancing their nuclear disarmament efforts. Concrete disarmament measures should be initiated by all nuclear-weapon States. They must demonstrate their commitment in a manner which is both verifiable and irreversible. If they want to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons, they must also be prepared to accept the total elimination of those weapons. Also, in this connection, we need to reiterate that we want peace which is created without nuclear weapons, and not the other way around.

(Mr. Puja, Indonesia)

Due to the long impasse and the complexity of today's challenges, the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 63/82, called upon the Conference on Disarmament to further intensify consultations and explore possibilities with a view to reaching an agreement on a programme of work. In this context, I am confident that under your experience and skilful chairmanship, Mr. President, you will be able to conduct our business and facilitate the deliberations in a transparent and inclusive manner through intensive consultations. That would hopefully result in a positive decision on the programme. Hence, it is imperative that we all exercise our utmost flexibility and demonstrate our political will for that purpose. Therefore, we need to be more creative and tactful in our approaches in order to make further progress. I believe that there are other potential ways and means to move forward. In this regard, the participation of international organizations and civil society is an option worth considering. Their active engagement would no doubt enrich our deliberations in finding a possible way out. The importance of their contribution was also underlined in the statement of the United Nations Secretary-General.

I would be remiss if I did not convey our profound concern over the grave situation in the Gaza Strip and the tragic consequences of the excessive and disproportionate use of force that deserves our critical attention, especially by this Conference, in which the virtues of disarmament lie.

For Indonesia, the issue of disarmament is not only an issue that stems from negotiations but it is a promise long delayed, a dream long awaited, and a commitment long overdue. Now, its success is entirely up to us, which requires that the international community, through this Conference, comes together with one determining voice in the coming weeks to make progress in the programme of work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Puja for the statement that he made and also for the kind words he addressed to me. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Algeria, Ambassador Jazairy.

Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria): I am speaking in my national capacity to say how deeply shocked I was by the callous statement made by the representative of Israel. He asserted that the threat of arms transfers to terrorists remains the main lesson to be drawn from what we have been witnessing in Gaza. Is the issue really today to prevent militants from Palestine from resorting to rudimentary weapons to resist the oppression of occupation forces that have been imposing a callous blockage for 18 months, depriving 1.5 million people of food and heating, and that have been resorting recently to the most modern and efficient killing machine to kill 1,400 or more civilians and wounding 5,000 others, a third of them children and women? Is the problem today that the Conference was mute about the suffering of the inhabitants of southern Israel with a loss of four or five civilians killed by rockets - and one life is priceless, I admit - but is this the problem or is the problem that of 1,400 innocent people killed and 5,300 others wounded?

The distinguished representative of Indonesia referred to disproportionate force, and I think this would be an understatement, at least. It seems to me that if there is a lesson to be drawn from

(Mr. Jazairy, Algeria)

the tragedy that we have witnessed in Gaza, it is that if you want an international force, it is not just to prevent the trading of a few old weapons. It is to protect the lives of 1.5 million civilians that are only given one choice now: to die in silence, because if they resist being killed they are called terrorists. The challenge today is to look at the Middle East as we would like to see it - as an area free from nuclear weapons, an area where you do not condone one non-NPT Power that holds nuclear weapons and you claim that another that is a member of the NPT is the villain.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Jazairy for his statement, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Dayan Jayatilleka.

Mr. JAYATILLEKA (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, I congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference, not least because you represent a country, Viet Nam, and a people who epitomize the values and the spirit of heroic resistance against oppression. Viet Nam is a symbol of the people of my generation.

I would like to support the statement made on behalf of the G21 by Ambassador Jazairy of Algeria. I would also like to make reference and take exception to the remarks on terrorism and the Conference on Disarmament and Gaza made by the distinguished representative of Israel. Israel is a country with which Sri Lanka has friendly fully-fledged diplomatic relations, and we also have cooperation in many fields, including the military field. Notwithstanding this friendship, the bodies of dead children that are being pulled out from under the rubble in Gaza while the embers of white phosphorus are still aglow make it an ethical imperative for me to critique and refute some of the remarks made here today.

Writing in The Nation of 6 January, Barbara Crossette, the veteran New York Times editorial writer and United Nations correspondent, said of the terrorist enemy that Sri Lanka has been fighting that it is "the most lethal and totalitarian terrorist army in contemporary Asia". Contemporary Asia includes the Taliban, Al-Qaida, Abu Sayaf, the MILF and so many other terrorist organizations. We, Sri Lanka, we have been facing what Barbara Crossette calls the "most lethal and totalitarian" of them all. These are not ghetto juveniles throwing home-made rockets across the walls of their prisons. This is a terrorist army that murdered the former Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi. And we have been fighting and defeating this enemy. We have not complained that the Conference on Disarmament did not speak up about the Sri Lankan citizens and leaders who have been murdered over the decades by the Tigers. The Conference on Disarmament did not take up that issue, but we have no specific complaint on that matter. We know what it is to face terrorism and we know how to fight it, and we know that it is not necessary when you are fighting in built-up areas such as Jaffna, which we liberated from the Tigers - we know that it is not necessary to use white phosphorus and that kind of force that keeps on hitting marked United Nations buildings and schools and mosques and hospitals and warehouses. That is not the way to resist terrorism.

What is most cynical is that we know that Israel has the military capacity to fight in built-up areas in a far more surgical manner. I visited Jerusalem as a boy after the Six-Day War.

(Mr. Jayatilleka, Sri Lanka)

I had friends who had fought on the Israeli side in taking Jerusalem from a very tough foe, the Jordanian army. There were no heavy civilian casualties in that fighting because Jerusalem was regarded as a sacred city, so great care was taken by the armies led by the distinguished Israeli general after whom I have the privilege of being named. Human life is as sacred as a city. And the Israeli armed forces that could take Jerusalem in 1967 with minimum civilian casualties could very well have fought to flush out its foes from Gaza City. The Israeli defence forces are also known to have conducted very dramatic commando raids into Beirut, taking out their targets in the 1960s and the 1970s. Defence Minister Barak led one of those legendary raids. Israel has also demonstrated the capacity for the selective elimination of targets from the air. All these capacities are within the ability of the Israeli defence forces. Therefore, what we witnessed in Gaza was completely unnecessary and the lesson is that security in the Middle East, non-proliferation in the Middle East, has not been aided by the heightened threat perceptions that have been generated by the sheer impunity demonstrated by the only nuclear Power in the area. Therefore, I conclude by reaffirming and recalling the point made by Ambassador Jazairy that what the Conference needs to do and what the world needs to do is to take a fresh look at the Middle East. And, I might add, to think of ways in which the underlying and long-standing reality of the occupation of a people can be removed.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Jayatilleka for his remarks and also for his warm feelings towards my country and my people. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Syria, Mr. Abdulmaola Al-Nuqari.

Mr. AL-NUQARI (Syrian Arab Republic) (spoke in Arabic): Mr. President, allow me first of all also to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, the first presidency of this year. We hope that we will be able to make progress towards bringing the Conference out of its current stalemate.

We shall not at present be submitting a comprehensive statement on the work of the Conference. That will come later, in due course. Naturally, we endorse the statement of the delegate of Algeria, both his national statement and also much of the statement that he made in his national capacity. However, the issue that my delegation wishes to pause to consider now is Israel's terrorism against the Palestinian people and the peoples of the region. It appears that this issue has not only attracted the attention of the countries of the region. The depth of the wounds and suffering are felt not only by the Palestinian people in Gaza; I believe that it came as a shock that shook the humanity of every person on earth. The scenes of killing to which some had access - I believe there are many scenes that many people were not permitted to see - there are scenes of killing, atrocities and depictions of corpses that would make anyone believe that we are dealing with a dreadful monster.

In Gaza, it only remains for Israel to use nuclear weapons. There are scenes of destruction so horrific that when one sees them one might believe that Israel was on the verge of using nuclear weapons to destroy a defenceless people. Some people were killed while they were

(Mr. Al-Nuqari, Syrian Arab Republic)

handcuffed. At least 1,400 were killed, and the number continues to grow, as more remain to be found under the rubble. Forty per cent were children and more than 15 per cent were women. What kind of terrorism are we discussing now? Yes, weapons should not be handed over to terrorists. Yes, there are States that commit appalling terrorism, terrorism not directed against a people but against the humanity of man. What happened in Gaza is making man lose his respect for humanity.

Some of those who were allowed to see what happened, including some Israelis, felt ashamed. Now, weapons - of course, you are talking about a people - there are arms dealers who like to try out all kinds of weapons, to delight in the suffering of others. There were crimes of genocide, ethnic cleansing and starvation. Before the war there was starvation and slow death, the embargo, not allowing in medicines and food, but with the war, even the United Nations was not spared. The grain, food and fuel stores were targeted. We sit here and feel cold if there is no heating, but there, there is an entire defenceless people with no electricity, no water, no heating and no food. There, those who have even minor injuries could die from their wounds.

The United Nations was targeted on three occasions. Although the United Nations had confirmed that there were only children there, a school with 40 children in it was utterly destroyed, the children killed. Of course, Israel's history of targeting the United Nations is not new; it was founded on targeting the international system. Count Bernadotte was one of the first victims of the United Nations, one of Israel's United Nations victims. The whole system is based on terrorism - but then we hear those who say that there is terrorism. Yes there is appalling terrorism, Israeli terrorism, and we should all feel ashamed that the delegate of the State of Israel is here with us, after all the horrendous crimes that have been committed.

There are mechanisms for keeping accounts, sometimes there are data that may be internal and related to election calculations, there is a people that must pay the price of Israel's election calculations with the innocent lives, just in the electoral calculations machine. What has the international community done? There is total disregard for the humanity of man. We are in the twenty-first century, in the twenty-first century, and the humanity of man is being violated. What happened in Gaza is a matter far greater than that of a people striving for freedom and independence, as all peoples on earth have striven. It is a matter of cleansing; it is a matter of genocide. I think that anyone who saw the images that we had access to would find that what I have said is the very least that could be put into words. For those that did not have access to those images, I believe that the few images that leaked out to the media or the press, although some media were present but censored, the few that leaked out would undermine any future claim by anyone who has the audacity to take the floor and speak of human rights. The worst violations of human rights in history took place in Gaza.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Al-Nuqari of Syria for his remarks, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Iran, Ambassador Alireza Moaiyeri.



Mr. MOAIYERI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, first I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. We appreciate your tireless efforts to consult the delegations with a view to obtaining consensus on the approval of the agenda and also a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. I assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation. I also would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Hernández of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for effectively and skilfully directing the Conference's activities to a successful conclusion last year.

I fully associate myself and my delegation with the statement delivered by Ambassador Idriss Jazairy on behalf of the G21. My delegation attaches great importance to the work of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. This role of the CD should always be preserved.

I had not planned to speak today, but I would like to express a few points.

What was done in Gaza at the beginning of the year 2009 by the Israeli regime is so horrific that it cannot be described in words. This criminal act turned the New Year celebrations into death and destruction for the innocent people of Gaza and into mourning, anguish and untold pain and grief for every civilized human being across the globe.

The indiscriminate attacks and the abhorrent crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Zionists in the Gaza Strip resulted in the massacre or lifelong disability of thousands of innocent men, women and children. Many houses and civilian buildings were totally demolished through the brutal attacks from the air, land and sea. The Israeli forces had no mercy on anyone. Children in nursery schools, men in their farms or workshops and women were treated equally as the workers in the offices of international organizations who were in Gaza to help the suffering civilians. They have been under the bombardments and other kinds of military attacks indiscriminately. What was done in Gaza by the Israeli regime is a clear example of crimes against humanity and genocide. These are among crimes without precedent in human history. It needs to be seriously considered by the international community.

This event once again reminds us that the rejection of the NPT by the Israeli regime and its clandestine nuclear activities are extremely threatening to the security of the region and the whole world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Moaiyeri of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his remarks and also for the kind words he addressed to me.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. LANDMAN (Netherlands): This is the first time in over seven months that I take the floor in this hall, the first time since 3 June 2008, for a reason. Today, this very afternoon, ends a period of transition in Washington. At the same time, the Conference on Disarmament is

(Mr. Landman, Netherlands)

entering a period of transition of its own which I can only hope will be as short, just to allow me at least to witness the beginning of the revival of this body, when on 1 June I will leave Geneva after 37 years in the Dutch Foreign Service, in pursuit of another destiny.

There are by now many indications in the direction of an imminent revival of arms control and disarmament, in particular in the United States on the basis of a bipartisan approach, but also and increasingly in Europe, ever since the important statement made by the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett at the Carnegie Foundation. We have seen so many prominent citizens coming out on the subject: from Douglas Hurd, Malcolm Rifkind, Lord Owen and former NATO Secretary-General Robertson on ditching the bomb in the Times of London, and a prominent Italian quintet in the Corriere della Sera on a world without nuclear arms to, most recently, a German view in the International Herald Tribune by Helmut Schmidt, Richard von Weizsäcker, Egon Bahr and Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Also in my own country, the Netherlands, there is a revival of interest in a “global zero” approach.

My point is that there is a danger, a real danger, that when the time has come the CD will no longer be considered as the obvious framework for the negotiations and substantive deliberations envisaged and so urgently required. Surely, this is for the wrong reasons. We are not to blame, nor is Geneva to be censured for the stalemate which has crippled this body for far too long. As our distinguished Pakistani colleague, Masood Khan, pointed out in his remarkable farewell address in September, the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament is because of divergences of the national security interests of Conference on Disarmament members as perceived at the highest levels of decision-making. The Conference on Disarmament itself is not to be faulted, because all delegations come here to work hard and to produce results. In these circumstances it is imperative that we do not continue to wait and see until we all fall asleep and this body with us. That would indeed be providing the final blow. Instead, we, all of us really should put out a special effort in creative pragmatism and willingness for compromise, looking afresh and in an unbiased way at what has been achieved so far as a compromise package. What is really, really indispensable is to give it more balance, credibility and reassurance, be it verification or whatever else. We have to be ready and prepared so as to give credibility to those who continue to maintain that this body still provides the best framework for the rapid progress that these coming times of opportunity require. In short, I still have some hope left for the Conference on Disarmament, but I am not that sure if I should congratulate you on the occasion of your acceding to this presidency or if I should convey to you my sincerest condolences at the prospective demise, after 13 years of mere stagnation, of a failed Conference you are about to chair these coming weeks.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ambassador Landman. All of us here share many of the things that you have said, and we can all say that The Hague, which is the site of the Convention on Chemical Weapons, is very successful, and Geneva has been successful and Geneva is going to be successful. I would ask for understanding because I would like to decline your expression of condolences for the work of the CD. We have had consultations with more than 60 delegations, and since arriving about a week ago I have had the privilege of meeting with

(The President)

more than 20 delegations. We have had a number of meetings, and all delegates have expressed their firm support for the work of the CD, even though we know that things are difficult, and I believe that our job as diplomats is to make the impossible possible. I thank you very much and I share your sentiments.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this juncture? That does not seem to be the case, so, with the inspiring remarks from the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands, I think we should conclude our business for today.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 22 January, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.