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Official Records

Disarmament Commission

296th meeting

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New York

Chairman: Mr. Towpik (Poland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). 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 the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2009 session. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. The European Union looks forward to working closely with you to achieve a successful outcome to this session.

Given recent initiatives in the sphere of disarmament, especially with regard to nuclear disarmament, we look forward to building on this momentum and to seizing this opportunity to have a fruitful debate with a view to making recommendations to the General Assembly. We expect that at this session the Commission will put forward the elements of the draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade and submit them for the consideration of the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, as stipulated by resolution 61/67.

We are fully aware that, in a world of growing interdependence, it is essential for the international

community to stimulate and deepen awareness of the common human interest in strengthening international peace and security.

The international community today faces an enormous number of challenges. The resolution of difficult and complex issues requires the everyday political will of all members of the international community in conducting dialogue, promoting cooperation and developing confidence-building measures. It also requires a deep acknowledgment of the relationship between disarmament, social and economic development and environmental protection. From this point of view, the fourth disarmament decade could play a role in steering global efforts to meet contemporary challenges in the area of arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation and international security.

We have recently witnessed several positive developments in international relations that have increased the hope of achieving tangible results in the field of disarmament. However, the launch using ballistic missile technology by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the announcement that it will suspend cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) go against this positive current and are not conducive to efforts to promote dialogue and regional peace and stability. The declaration by the presidency on behalf of the EU states:

“The EU strongly condemns the ‘experimental communications satellite’ launch performed on 5 April 2009 by the Government of

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the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in breach of United Nations Security Council resolution 1718 (2006). These actions place additional strains on regional stability at a time when the unresolved nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula requires mutual confidence building. Such actions are also a matter of more general concern due to their global proliferation implications.

“The EU urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply with the United Nations Security Council resolution 1718 (2006) and immediately to suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile programme and abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

“The EU will continue actively to support efforts to resolve the security issues on the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner.”

We hope that all countries concerned will focus on ways to build confidence and restore dialogue.

The European Union stresses the need for general and complete disarmament. Non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control remain indispensable elements of cooperative security between States. There is broad agreement that the security of the international community continues to be challenged, both globally and regionally, by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and the risk that non-State actors could gain access to those weapons. The existence of potential clandestine military nuclear activities remains of particular concern, as does the proliferation of ballistic missiles of increasingly great range.

Our conviction, as expressed in the 2003 European Union strategy against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, is that a multilateral approach to non-proliferation provides the best means of countering the threat to international peace and security resulting from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. It is thus of utmost importance that all existing disarmament and non-proliferation agreements be effectively resourced, implemented and fully complied with.

The European Union believes that the prevention of nuclear proliferation and the pursuit of nuclear

disarmament, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), are essential for global peace and security. The NPT, based on three equally important and mutually reinforcing pillars — non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy — provides the essential multilateral norm and the basis of all endeavours to address the security challenges in the nuclear field.

In this regard, we recognize that major proliferation events have occurred since the end of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. In view of the current proliferation risks, we are convinced that the NPT is more important today than ever. Its authority and integrity must be preserved and strengthened. To this end, the European Union will continue to promote all the objectives laid out in the Treaty. The European Union will continue to work towards universal accession to the NPT, calling on all States not party to the NPT to undertake a commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament and to become States parties to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

It is most important that all States parties work together to meet the challenges to the NPT. We hope that the third session of the Preparatory Committee will provide tangible results and will contribute to the successful outcome of the 2010 Review Conference. We will endeavour to ensure that, in a balanced, effective, concrete and pragmatic manner, the 2010 Conference examines the means of stepping up international efforts against proliferation, pursuing disarmament and ensuring the responsible development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy by countries wishing to develop their capacities in this field.

The European Union would like to highlight the unique and indispensable role of the IAEA in verifying States' compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation commitments. The European Union believes that the international safeguards system of the IAEA is the irreplaceable basis for verification in the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and to the success of this multilateral system. The European Union would like to reiterate its call for universal accession to the comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols.

Europe's security benefits from continued global disarmament efforts. We welcome the nuclear

disarmament measures taken by the two European Union nuclear-weapon States and their initiatives in this field. We call on the international community to work on promoting the concrete and realistic disarmament initiatives endorsed by our 27 heads of State and Government, which we submitted to the General Assembly in 2008 with a view to the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is as essential to nuclear disarmament as it is to non-proliferation. A new momentum in support of its entry into force is being felt. In this regard, the European Union welcomes the decision of the new United States administration to immediately and aggressively pursue United States ratification of the CTBT. We hope that this approach will inspire the remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay and without conditions.

Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, we urge all States to abide by a moratorium and to refrain from any actions that are contrary to the obligations and provisions of the CTBT. The European Union will spare no effort to confirm this momentum and to promote the early ratification of the Treaty by the few remaining annex 2 States, notably ahead of the 2009 Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, or Article XIV Conference, and of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The European Union will continue to offer practical support for both the universalization of the CTBT and the credibility of its verification regime.

The Treaty on Strategic Offensive Arms, which reduced United States and Russian strategic nuclear weapons arsenal to 6,000 accountable warheads, is due to expire in December 2009. The European Union welcomes the commitments of these countries, as reiterated in a recent joint declaration by President Obama and President Medvedev, to seek a new agreement by the end of this year that will be legally binding and sufficiently bold. A new arms control agreement between the United States and Russia reflecting further nuclear reductions is a major issue on the disarmament agenda in the perspective of the 2010 Review Conference and would be an essential step forward.

Since security in Europe is linked to security in the Middle East, the European Union attaches particular importance to non-proliferation and

disarmament issues in that region. The establishment of a mutually agreed and verifiable zone in the Middle East free of all nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is regarded by the European Union as a means of enhancing security and stability in the region. The European Union remains committed to and recognizes the importance of implementing the relevant resolutions on the Middle East adopted by the Security Council and the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

The proliferation risks presented in particular by the nuclear programmes of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continue to be a matter of ongoing serious concern to us. A negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue is of cardinal importance to the European Union since, if Iran were to acquire a military nuclear capability, it would constitute an unacceptable threat to regional and international security. We shall continue to engage in dialogue with Iran with a view to quickly finding a negotiated solution in the context of the dual-track approach. In that regard, the European Union strongly supports the announced United States engagement, including direct dialogue, with Iran and believes that the current windows of opportunity must be seized by Iran.

The European Union is convinced that the Disarmament Commission should devote adequate attention at this just-opened cycle to conventional weapons, including the issue of small arms and light weapons.

The European Union is strongly committed to eradicating the illicit accumulation and trade in small arms and light weapons and associated ammunition. The European Union seeks to reduce the unregulated availability of small arms and light weapons and associated ammunition in areas of conflict or potential conflict. To further its objectives, the European Union has adopted a set of specific instruments. The European Union notably decided in December 2008 to include in all future international agreements with third countries a specific article on the illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

The European Union welcomes the positive discussions and fruitful results of the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent,

Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Outcome Document adopted at the Third Biennial Meeting highlights the key role for international cooperation, assistance and capacity-building and offers United Nations Member States a series of forward-looking steps and measures and a reinvigorated institutional framework to address the proliferation of small arms and their misuse.

The European Union supports the full implementation and further strengthening in the future of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, *inter alia*, by making it legally binding. At the first meeting devoted to its implementation, which took place in July 2008 in the framework of the Third Biennial Meeting, States agreed on a number of practical steps and measures that have to be taken to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Instrument.

The European Union strongly supports the United Nations process towards a comprehensive, legally binding arms trade treaty to establish common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms, consistent with existing responsibilities of States under relevant international law and in full respect of their sovereignty and internal institutional and legal frameworks. The European Union is taking concrete steps to promote the United Nations process through a series of regional seminars. The European Union is convinced that an arms trade treaty would make a tangible contribution to global security and stability.

In order to provide a more effective answer to these serious challenges, on 8 December 2008 the European Union adopted a Common Position that reinforced and made legally binding the previous political commitments of its 1998 Code of Conduct on arms exports.

The European Union reiterates the priority importance it attaches to promoting and achieving universal adherence and full implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW).

The European Union has consistently reiterated that the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, needs to be addressed urgently and effectively, taking into account military requirements and humanitarian concerns alike. The European Union welcomes the adoption in Dublin of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and its signature by 96 States, including 66 high contracting parties to the CCW. As several high contracting parties are not yet in a position to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the European Union is convinced that concluding, in the framework of the CCW, a complementary agreement compatible with the Convention on Cluster Munitions would contribute significantly to addressing the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions.

The European Union is convinced that transparency in the field of conventional weapons is a key component in combating the uncontrolled dissemination of such weapons and for promoting an atmosphere of trust between States and security.

In conclusion, we wish you, Mr. Chairman, every success in your endeavours. Please be reassured of the full support of the European Union countries.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Algerian delegation, allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, once again on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission and to assure you of our active support towards the success of our work. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

The Algerian delegation aligns itself with the statements made this morning by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States.

Algeria attaches special importance to the Disarmament Commission and shall spare no effort to ensure the effectiveness it needs to accomplish its work. The Commission plays an irreplaceable role, enabling member States to carry out in-depth deliberations and to consider disarmament issues in the broadest possible multilateral context.

The 2009 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission is of particular significance. It takes place following two unproductive cycles, during which the Commission was unable to adopt any recommendation at all, and on the eve of the third session of the

Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This represents a significant challenge that the States parties to the NPT must meet, in particular given the failure of the 2005 Review Conference.

The deadlock in the multilateral disarmament forums over the past 10 years has inevitably led to the absence of any significant progress in that regard. Disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, held hostage for far too long to narrow power relations and the logic of confrontation, have not been addressed as challenges to international peace and security. International relations have thereby been subject to relentless pressure, raising tensions and, in certain instances, triggering a renewed arms race.

Now that we have begun the work of the Commission's current session, positive signs of a possible thaw on the international disarmament agenda are emerging. The positions outlined by the new United States administration with regard to the NPT and the joint statement on nuclear disarmament, issued in London by the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States, reflect a new interest in and a new approach to disarmament issues. They fuel the hope that new perspectives on disarmament in general, and nuclear disarmament in particular, are possible.

We are called upon to redouble our efforts to take advantage of that positive environment in the framework of the Commission's work. That will also have a direct impact on the spirit in which we work and on the outcomes of the upcoming meetings, in particular those of the third session of the NPT Preparatory Committee to be held in May, as well as on the eighth NPT Review Conference itself, which is scheduled for 2010.

Algeria reiterates its principled position on the ultimate goal of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, which continues to be the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The steadfast and ongoing commitment of the entire international community, and in particular that of nuclear-weapon States, is crucial to the achievement of that goal.

While nuclear non-proliferation is one of the pillars of the NPT, there are other equally essential pillars to the Treaty. Algeria calls for the effective and gradual implementation of article VI by nuclear-weapon States, in particular through the application of

the 13 practical steps adopted at the 2000 Review Conference. We would also like to reiterate the importance of observing and effectively implementing the provisions of article IV on the right of States to carry out research, develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Those three pillars of the NPT are mutually reinforcing and provide the necessary balance to the Treaty.

The discussions taking place at various levels, including at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), with regard to establishing a multilateral mechanism to provide nuclear fuel should enjoy the widest possible consultation among Member States, in full respect of the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

As we welcome the entry into force of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the effort to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East has not yet been successful, despite the decision taken at the 1995 Review Conference. Translating the commitment of the international community to that end into reality is a priority for my country. That goal has been hampered primarily by Israel, which, unlike all the other countries of the region, has refused to join the NPT and to place its nuclear installations under IAEA safeguards.

Among other things, this session of the Disarmament Commission will have to work on developing elements of a draft declaration of the United Nations fourth disarmament decade 2010-2020. Algeria will join that effort out of its desire to make its full contribution to setting out recommendations for practical measures that will serve as a road map. We believe it would be desirable to draw from the experiences of the past three disarmament decades and to build on the progress that has been made. Positive developments on the international stage should make it possible to adopt elements for a declaration that is broader in scope and sets more ambitious goals.

My country is convinced of the importance of revitalizing multilateral disarmament forums. We have spared no effort to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament, which, as the Commission is aware, is now entering its eleventh consecutive year of deadlock. That unique multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament issues continues to be paralysed by

differing views about priorities and the issues to be addressed.

On 26 March, on behalf of the six Presidents of the Conference's 2009 session, Algeria introduced a non-paper aimed at relaunching the work of the Conference. That initiative, which was the result of extensive and lengthy consultations, puts forward a draft programme of work based on the efforts of all members of the Conference as a whole, and in particular the Presidents of the 2008 session. The draft programme of work envisages the establishment of four working groups and the naming of three rapporteurs that will reflect all issues on the Conference's agenda.

In conclusion, the delegation of Algeria reiterates its desire to make its full and positive contribution to the work of this session. We will spare no effort to ensure the success of the Commission.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the Chairman of this deliberative body. We would like to express sincere and deep appreciation to you and the Bureau for the way and manner in which you have worked to achieve the agenda of the current session.

It is a matter of regret that the Disarmament Commission, the main deliberative body of the United Nations charged with the responsibility of considering and making recommendations on various disarmament-related issues and following up on relevant decisions and recommendations of the special sessions devoted to disarmament, has failed, in the past two cycles, to reach consensus on any of the substantive issues before it.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as that delivered by my delegation on behalf of the African Group. In addition, we would like to highlight a few points.

Nigeria remains concerned about the grave consequences that the existence of nuclear arms poses to international peace and security. In that regard, we believe that nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority of Member States and that the best way to address negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation is through multilateralism. That is a core principle endorsed by resolution 63/50. We are no less disturbed by the fact that, despite renewed efforts

to resolve the impasse caused by nuclear arms, there appears to be little or no progress on that issue. We therefore call on nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States alike to lend their support to current efforts to achieve the objectives of disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects.

Nigeria believes that the commitment of negative security assurances made to non-nuclear-weapon States by nuclear-weapon States should be unconditional, legally binding and unequivocal. However, we have observed that even the voting pattern at the most recent session of the General Assembly on the resolution on nuclear security assurances was marked by a high level of abstentions on the part of nuclear-weapon States and their allies. We call on concerned Member States to reverse that trend in order not to revive the nuclear arms race, a development that could negate all the achievements made over past decades.

Pending the achievement of a nuclear-free world, my delegation welcomes the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, as they represent positive steps and important measures towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We call on Member States to encourage the various nuclear-weapon-free zones already in existence with greater vigour. With regard to the African region, we call on countries of the continent that have not yet signed and ratified the Treaty of Pelindaba to do so in order to allow it to enter into force. Its entry into force will no doubt effectively contribute to strengthening regional and global peace and security.

Nigeria is equally concerned about the proliferation, illicit manufacture and transfer of conventional weapons. We are all aware of the great dangers posed to human security by the excessive accumulation of those weapons, and especially by the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Those weapons are responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of human beings. Many of those who have survived attacks with those weapons have had their lives diminished forever. Those weapons also foster the culture of violence and have become a destabilizing factor in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries. In that regard, conflicts that should have hitherto been resolved internally are externalized. In addition to compounding the humanitarian dimensions of the problem, the cumulative effect of all that has hampered efforts to improve the socio-economic situation of our peoples.

It is for those reasons that my delegation continues to actively support the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The realization of the negative impact of the proliferation and illicit manufacture and transfer of small arms and light weapons was also what led countries in the West Africa subregion to take on this challenge by adopting a landmark convention on small arms and light weapons in June 2006. That convention places a ban on arms transfers into, from or through the entire region. In order to further the principles of the convention, my delegation has always called for a comprehensive and legally binding global arms trade treaty.

We are pleased with the adoption, by the overwhelming majority of Member States, of resolution 61/89 on the establishment of such a treaty. My delegation therefore supports the United Nations process towards an arms trade treaty. It is our hope that delegations will recognize the grave dangers posed by small arms and light weapons and drive the ongoing United Nations process to negotiate a global arms trade treaty and to consider making the proliferation and illicit manufacture and transfer of small arms and light weapons a priority item on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission.

We appeal to all Member States to show flexibility and understanding for each others' points of view so that together we can achieve the required consensus in our deliberations during this session.

We are encouraged by new commitments made by the United States, reaffirming the positions taken by the Presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation during the meeting of the G-20 held earlier this month in London. We are hopeful that the successful outcome of that meeting will contribute to the prospects for the forthcoming 2009 session of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Preparatory Committee and to the 2010 Review Conference itself.

Ms. Jahan (Bangladesh): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election. We appreciate the patience and diligence that you have already shown during the adoption of the consensus agenda for this session. I am confident that your able stewardship will lend renewed impetus to the work of

the Commission. We appreciate the statement delivered earlier by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

My delegation also aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, I would like to touch upon the following points in my national capacity.

The current session of the Disarmament Commission is taking place at an opportune time, when the disarmament agenda has taken on some momentum following a long stalemate. Recent statements made by a number of States have stimulated talks on disarmament, particularly on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Renewed commitments by certain nuclear-weapon States have added further momentum to that end. However, those need to be translated into practical action. In my delegation's view, multilateralism remains the only way to work effectively towards the universalization of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments.

In the same vein, we take note of the recent positive trend in the Conference on Disarmament. I hope that deliberations at this session of the Commission will also have a practical impact on the achievement of the goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. For our part, my delegation is fully committed to providing its full support and cooperation to the work of the Commission.

The Disarmament Commission has a record of mixed results. To mention a few, its successes include the 1992 adoption of the Guidelines and Recommendations for Objective Information on Military Matters, the 1993 consensus guidelines for regional disarmament, the 1996 consensus on international arms transfers and the 1999 consensus on two sets of guidelines regarding the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and conventional arms control. Thereafter, to great frustration, the Commission could not produce any significant developments. We hope that Member States will show the utmost flexibility this year in order to adopt consensus recommendations with regard to issues before the Commission.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are the most important instruments of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament

regime. We reaffirm the need for the universality of the NPT, the CTBT and all major international disarmament instruments without any exception. Yet, regrettably, the lack of political will on the part of some Member States has impeded progress towards those goals. We therefore call for effective measures towards the universalization of the NPT and the CTBT without any further delay. We also maintain that the statements of nuclear-weapon States and the efforts of the international community must be matched by concrete action and not just rhetoric.

Regional initiatives can play a significant role in achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones constitutes important progress towards establishing a nuclear-weapon-free world. We welcome the recently established Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. We call upon other Member States of the region, including those of our own neighbourhood of South Asia, to follow that example.

The NPT guarantees the inalienable right of all States, particularly non-nuclear-weapon States, to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Resources must be mobilized from the non-proliferation and disarmament fields towards technical and financial assistance to compliant Member States that are in dire need of nuclear energy for peaceful uses.

Bangladesh has played its due role in achieving disarmament and non-proliferation. It has unconditionally opted to remain non-nuclear and has become a party to almost every disarmament-related treaty, including the NPT and the CTBT. Bangladesh remains under the safeguards measures of the International Atomic Energy Agency, including its additional protocol. That is tangible testimony of our unwavering commitment to the goal of disarmament in general and nuclear disarmament in particular.

We believe that an absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons can be ensured only through their total elimination. As a practical measure, the total elimination of nuclear weapons could be done in phases. In parallel to that process, a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States must be concluded. That will provide security assurance to existing non-nuclear-weapons States and

an incentive to others to join the club of non-nuclear-weapon States.

We are heading towards the fourth disarmament decade in the 2010s. The time has come to take stock of our achievements during previously adopted declarations. We call upon all Member States to incorporate practical measures for the implementation of our disarmament goals. The declaration should therefore be drafted to include comprehensive elements and specific mechanisms for effective implementation and follow-up.

We believe in complete and general disarmament, including the control and non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We maintain that, in ensuring the right to self-defence, international transfers of all conventional weapons should be controlled through an internationally agreed legal regime. We welcome the positive developments so far towards a draft legally binding arms trade treaty. We hope that the international community will soon be able to agree on the scope, principles and parameters of an arms trade treaty, thereby establishing a legally binding regime for responsible international transfers of conventional weapons.

In conclusion, let me say that the lack of consensus among Member States has repeatedly prevented the Commission from adopting agreed recommendations over the past few years. While this has been both frustrating and disappointing, we take solace in the fact that there now seem to be some positive winds of change. We must seize this momentum. I hope that member States will show maximum flexibility and understanding in order to bring the work of the Commission to fruition.

Mrs. Kolontai (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, we should like to touch on a number of issues.

This is not the first time that the Disarmament Commission has had difficulties adopting an agenda, but a compromise has been reached and, in our view, that is evidence of States' interest in preserving multilateral approaches to resolving issues related to disarmament and international security.

At this session, we will again be working on a draft declaration of a disarmament decade. It should be

noted that most of the goals and guidelines set out in the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade remain relevant today. We must continue to strive to achieve the timely reduction and, ultimately, the destruction of nuclear weapons and to ban nuclear testing entirely. In our view, the declaration must also express the intention of the United Nations Member States to take preventive measures to avert the escalation of an arms race in the areas of weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. We should like to see the text include a provision on the intention not to allow the production and development of new types of weapons of mass destruction.

There can be no doubt that, in any work, it is the result that matters. However, with respect to the Disarmament Commission, the working process itself is no less important. The Commission's unique format as a specialized deliberative body allows us to voice and to hear new ideas and to discuss in depth specific issues related to disarmament. We are pleased that the Commission's agenda includes an item on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Belarus maintains that there is a need to pursue work on recommendations to achieve the goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and to do so in the framework of the Disarmament Commission, which is open to collaboration among all States, including those that are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and those that are not.

To be sure, it is hard in the nuclear sphere to overcome the gravitational pull of national positions that have been taking shape for decades, as well as the differences of which we are all well aware. At the same time, there is a broad range of practical issues on which we need not only to exchange views, but also to collectively assess potential mechanisms to resolve.

Among the many examples of that is the issue of extending existing agreements, including with respect to intermediate- and shorter-range missiles. The question of enhancing mutual trust between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States has become increasingly urgent. Another issue of fundamental importance is the provision of legally binding and unconditional negative security assurances to non-nuclear States.

Practical steps by nuclear-weapon States towards nuclear disarmament are the most effective confidence- and security-building measures and the most reliable

means of countering nuclear proliferation. Preventing the emergence of a legal vacuum in the field of strategic offensive weapons and reaching a verifiable agreement on further reductions of such weapons and control over their delivery systems would make a significant contribution to enhancing global security.

Developing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for the control of conventional weapons and confidence- and security-building measures are no less important in the context of creating a stable foundation for the prevention of armed conflicts and enhanced national and regional security.

Belarus has consistently supported the early entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, as well as the adaptation of the Vienna Document 1999 to the new military-political situation on the European continent. We also support the Russian Federation's proposal on the creation of a new security architecture in Europe.

Belarus takes a responsible attitude towards fulfilling its obligations and a purposeful approach to addressing the advisability of entering into new obligations. Possessing the seventh largest arsenal of anti-personnel landmines in the world, inherited from the past, Belarus advocates the universalization of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We continue to carry out the complex task of disposing of more than 3 million anti-personnel landmines and hope to receive international assistance in completing it.

There can also be no doubt of the importance of developing control measures for the arms trade in the context of preventing arms transfers to non-State actors and providing for regional stability. We are convinced that the development of new international instruments to control conventional weapons must take place within the United Nations in the context of a progressive and open discussion engaging all interested parties on the basis of consensus. Negotiating new international agreements without taking the key producers and possessors of such weapons into account could have a negative impact on the universality and viability of future agreements, and will not help to enhance mutual trust.

In conclusion, we wish all representatives successful and fruitful work, and express our hope that

this session of the Disarmament Commission will be crowned with success.

Mr. Kim Bonghyun (Republic of Korea): At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and to commend your sincere and tireless efforts to bring this meeting together. As the representative of a country that was entrusted with the same task three years ago, I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would also like to extend a word of gratitude to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Secretariat for their support.

We are now at the beginning of a new three-year cycle with a new substantive agenda, and are ready for a fresh start. My delegation welcomes the adoption of the agenda and hopes that the Commission will achieve relevance, balance and timeliness in discussing the three items, considering the worthy yet difficult process of forging consensus.

The global environment concerning nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has changed substantially over the past years. Although challenges to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime remain largely the same, many new initiatives and ideas are emerging in the sphere of nuclear disarmament, including the five-point proposal made by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and new policies introduced by nuclear-weapon States.

My delegation believes that the issue of nuclear disarmament deserves heightened international attention at this juncture for the sake of integrity, confidence and the legitimacy of the NPT regime. It seems clear that the outcome of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will be crucial to the future of the NPT regime, and the success of the Conference will depend on whether all States parties can achieve a visible, irreversible and universal commitment to nuclear disarmament, which needs to be reached within a reasonable time frame.

Having said that, the Republic of Korea firmly believes that further reinforcement and institutionalization of the global regime for nuclear non-proliferation are equally important. My delegation strongly supports the universalization of the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency as the best means to reinforce the monitoring and verification mechanism of the NPT. We would also like

to highlight the importance of international cooperation to prevent nuclear terrorism and, in this respect, support the efforts being made in the framework of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

To reach the dual goal of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation more effectively, the first set of goals that the international community should work on is an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. In this regard, we welcome President Obama's recent remarks in Prague in favour of an immediate and aggressive pursuit of CTBT ratification by the United States Government and encourage all signatories to the CTBT — especially the annex 2 countries — that have not yet ratified the Treaty to do so at an early date. In addition, we call for an early adoption of a programme of work at the Conference on Disarmament.

Considering the decade of stalemate in the field of disarmament, it is clear that the international community — and not only the disarmament community — needs and expects progress. My delegation welcomes deliberation on the issue of declaring the 2010s as the next disarmament decade, since such a declaration would be a useful way to bring international attention to a common agenda of our time. At the same time, we believe that the declaration of another disarmament decade should not be pursued as a goal in itself. Rather, our discussion should be focused on how the international community can garner broader political will and create common ground to enhance international peace and security through a new disarmament decade.

I would also like to express my delegation's full support for the Chairman's proposals on discussion of the working methods of the Commission and on inviting the two co-chairs of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament. As the Disarmament Commission has been unable to crystallize its deliberation into a substantive report since 1999, and as this year we have once again experienced difficulty in agreeing on a substantive agenda, the Commission's working methods are due for close scrutiny and overhaul. In addition, constant interaction with civil society is more often than not invaluable in advancing the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation so that we can come face to face with the grim realities of our world.

Last but not least, the Republic of Korea believes that the early resolution of the nuclear issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is vital to securing lasting peace and prosperity on the Korean peninsula and in North-East Asia and to sustaining the integrity of the global non-proliferation regime. In this respect, we have exerted our efforts to achieve the verifiable denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in a peaceful manner through the Six-Party Talks. However, it is regrettable that, against these efforts, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, following its rocket launch on 5 April in contravention of resolution 1718 (2006), further announced on 14 April that it would never again participate in the Six-Party Talks and would restore and reactivate the nuclear facilities that it had been disabling.

As demanded in the presidential statement of the Security Council adopted on 13 April (S/PRST/2009/7), we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with its obligations under resolution 1718 (2006) and implement the provisions of the 19 September 2005 joint statement and subsequent consensus documents adopted at the Six-Party Talks.

My Government will spare no effort to make substantial progress on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and requests the continued unwavering support of the international community to this end.

Mr. Jeenbaev (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for this year's session. My delegation assures you of its full support and constructive cooperation in our joint efforts. We would also like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Sergio Duarte, for his contribution to and efforts made in the disarmament and non-proliferation fields.

Let me reiterate that Kyrgyzstan is fully committed to the development of multilateral mechanisms in the disarmament and non-proliferation regime for weapons of mass destruction, which is one of the basic principles of our foreign policy. We believe that the strengthening of the international non-proliferation regime and its cornerstone, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), is one of the basic tools in this context.

Kyrgyzstan considers the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to be one of the key tools in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts ensuring stability and security.

We are convinced that the establishment of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone has been a real contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament in the world. The Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia was signed in September 2006, and I am happy to inform the Commission that, on 21 March 2009, the Treaty entered into force. Thus, the idea of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone declared by the Presidents of Central Asian States in the early 1990s has become a reality.

Kyrgyzstan was one of the initiators of and an active participant in the establishment of the Zone and is designated as the depositary of the Treaty. It is well-known that the United Nations first recognized the Central Asian initiative in a resolution submitted by the delegation of Kyrgyzstan and adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT. Several General Assembly resolutions submitted by five Central Asian States have since been adopted, and the initiative has been noted in the Final Document of the 2005 NPT Review Conference (NPT/CONF.2005/57).

The establishment of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone was an important step towards strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and disarmament process, promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and in the environmental rehabilitation of territories affected by remaining uranium tailings and radioactive contamination, and enhancing regional and international peace and security. The Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone is the first time a nuclear-weapon-free zone has been created in the northern hemisphere. The territory of the zone is about 3,882,000 square kilometres.

Inadequate attention has been given in the past to the serious issue of mitigating the environmental consequences of nuclear weapons programmes. As first articulated at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and as noted in the consensus Final Document of the 2005 NPT Review Conference, there have been exceptional instances in which serious environmental consequences have resulted from uranium mining and associated nuclear fuel-cycle

activities in the production of nuclear weapons. There are a number of uranium tailings and other toxic radioactive waste left by the mining industry on the territory of Kyrgyzstan. The conditions of the tailings did not meet safety standards during the period when these industries were active. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that many burial sites of highly toxic and fissile uranium waste are located in active seismic regions, in landslide risk areas, in flood-prone and high-groundwater zones and near rivers that form the foundation of the extended water basin of the Central Asian region. It is therefore necessary to undertake well-conditioned and effective efforts at all levels to prevent further contamination.

To respond to these challenges, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, in cooperation with the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme, is organizing a regional conference to discuss the framework document on solving the uranium tailings problem, to be held in Bishkek from 21 to 24 April 2009, and a high-level international forum on uranium tailings and other radioactive waste, to be held in Geneva on 29 June 2009.

I will briefly address other important issues in the non-proliferation and disarmament spheres. Kyrgyzstan considers the problem of information safety to be extremely important. The Kyrgyz Republic also supports the development of multilateral dialogue regarding the prohibition of the manufacture of fissile material, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the promotion of nuclear disarmament.

Kyrgyzstan considers the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction to be an effective tool for strengthening international peace and security and supports ensuring its universality.

The Kyrgyz Republic attaches great importance to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), aimed at counteracting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related technologies and materials. We agree that it is necessary to prevent access for non-State actors to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, related technologies and materials and the means of their delivery, including through the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). In implementing its provisions, the Government of

Kyrgyzstan continues to work to strengthen the country's export control system.

The delegation of Kyrgyzstan is concerned by the circulation of small arms and is taking relevant measures at the national level to combat their illegal dissemination. Kyrgyzstan supports the active participation of the United Nations, the proposal to draft a legally binding international document regulating the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, and the draft resolution on preventing and combating illegal brokering activities.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): The Indonesian delegation wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at this session and extends its congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. We are confident that your wisdom and extensive experience will facilitate a successful outcome of the session.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made earlier today on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

We thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for his statement reminding us of the great potential that the Commission possesses for achieving consensus on useful principles, guidelines and recommendations in the disarmament field, even in difficult times. We surely should be able to agree on the elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade, which we have been entrusted to do at this session. If that cannot be achieved, we should do so at the next session at the latest.

My delegation reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the only specialized, authoritative and deliberative organization of the United Nations disarmament machinery. The Commission, which is the only institution with universal membership that can sustain in-depth deliberations on the critical issues at stake and on substantive recommendations on how related goals can be feasibly achieved, remains central to our efforts.

Despite several setbacks over the past few years in arriving at substantive agreements, the Commission should continue to strive to return to the path of productivity. It is to be noted that, in the past, the Commission has played a critical role in generating global visibility in the areas of nuclear disarmament

and non-proliferation and conventional arms control. The Commission's viability and utility are demonstrated by the many productive sessions that have taken place, including those at which agreements were reached on guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and for conventional arms control, guidelines and recommendations related to objective information on military matters, guidelines for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security, and guidelines for international arms transfers, to name only a few.

Indeed, the present session of the Commission is being held at a time of opportunity, when positive signals have been exchanged among States. It is encouraging to note that words of dialogue and mutual respect seem to be taking prominence over tough talk about sanctions and threats. That environment bodes well for building trust and making progress. If we wish, we can achieve progress once again.

With regard to the agenda item "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", while efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation have slowed over the past decade, major nuclear possessors have recently sent positive signals concerning the attainment of the international community's core nuclear objectives, including by referring to article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is a cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

Indeed, the current international climate is opportune for a more ambitious diplomatic push. Such an effort should include deep reductions in nuclear arms towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, on the one hand, and encouragement for all States to commit to honouring their non-proliferation obligations, on the other. We must seize this historic moment to achieve our nuclear disarmament goals.

An agenda item on nuclear disarmament issues, which is mandated by General Assembly decision 52/492, should always be one of the agenda items of the Disarmament Commission. For this cycle, NAM has proposed a nuclear agenda item similar to that in the previous cycle. This agenda item takes into account the balance of interests in addressing the nuclear issue. We hope that the new international environment will

help to make progress possible, unlike in the past cycle.

With regard to the agenda item "Elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade", which General Assembly resolution 61/67 mandates us to address, the Commission should take into account the declarations of the three previous disarmament decades. It needs to build on the initiatives already begun, as well as to capitalize on the political will that is gaining strength worldwide.

The fourth disarmament decade could play an important role in promoting the goal of reversing the current trend in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, including indicative targets to accelerate the attainment of the objective of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. We believe that a wide range of disarmament issues can be considered for inclusion in the elements of a declaration of the fourth disarmament decade. Given the diverse interpretations of resolution 61/67, we call on the members of the Commission to work earnestly to successfully conclude the elements of a declaration as soon as possible.

Finally, we pledge our delegation's support and cooperation to you, Mr. Chairman, the other members of the Bureau and all other delegations in conducting a successful session.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): At the outset, my delegation wishes once again to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission and to assure you of South Africa's full cooperation and support. South Africa also wishes to associate itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

Multilateralism, with the United Nations and the Charter at its core, remains central to any effort to find sustainable solutions to the challenges to international peace and security. South Africa therefore continues to attach great value to the work of the Disarmament Commission, with its mandate as the deliberative arm of the multilateral disarmament machinery.

We welcome the adoption of a balanced agenda for this three-year cycle and believe that it provides a suitable framework within which to achieve consensus

recommendations at the end of our deliberations. Regarding the first substitute agenda item, South Africa remains guided by the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, informed by the principle that the only credible guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons is their total elimination.

This new cycle of the Commission's work is commencing in an international environment that is marked by both important new developments and enduring challenges in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In addition, we are witnesses to the fact that an increasing number of countries are considering the nuclear energy option as part of their national energy mix.

However, we are not starting the important work on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation from scratch; we have the elements contained in the Secretary-General's five-point proposal on attaining a world free of nuclear weapons, which provides the Commission with a comprehensive and balanced platform from which to launch our deliberations. In addition, the Working Group on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation made meaningful progress in its deliberations under the very able guidance of its Chair during the previous cycle.

For South Africa, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), with its three pillars of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, remains the most important international nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation instrument. The provisions of the Treaty, along with the decisions forming part of its review process, present a blueprint for a step-by-step approach to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons, de-emphasize their importance and lead to their elimination.

We note with great satisfaction that the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — the Pelindaba Treaty — is also poised to enter into force in the near future.

Security remains one of the most fundamental aspirations of humankind. The United Nations Charter is in fact premised on the notion of collective security, with the right to self-defence explicitly enshrined. History has, however, shown that the traditional approach of seeking security through the acquisition of the most advanced weapons and by building up huge

armies has led to numerous arms races and wars, including two devastating world wars.

The excessive accumulation of conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons, beyond legitimate self-defence purposes, has the potential to create or perpetuate the vicious cycle consisting of instability and conflict on the one hand and poverty and underdevelopment on the other. Confidence-building measures, which include transparency and other elements, could play an important role in preventing or addressing this downward spiral. South Africa therefore welcomes the inclusion of this item in the Commission's substantive agenda and looks forward to building on the work done by the Commission during the previous cycle under the capable stewardship of the Chair of that Working Group.

Finally, South Africa welcomes the inclusion of an item on the elements of a draft declaration on a fourth disarmament decade in the Commission's substantive agenda. This item will allow us collectively to develop the broader vision on a common purpose that has been lacking in recent years, which would allow us to benefit from the positive developments while addressing the substantial challenges in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Ms. Ochir (Mongolia): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for this year's session. We are confident that under your able stewardship this session of the Disarmament Commission will continue to advance the GA-entrusted mandate.

My delegation supports the agenda for the new cycle, which was adopted earlier today by the Commission.

Mongolia is committed to the purposes and principles of the Disarmament Commission as a specialized deliberative and universal body in the United Nations disarmament architecture. Mongolia contributed to the work of the Disarmament Commission by chairing the Commission in 1995 and submitting a working paper reflecting the perspective of Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status. We also contributed to the Commission's adoption of the guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones back in 1999.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. In addition to that, in my brief remarks I wish to emphasize the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones and their role in the attainment of the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

This year the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones is marked with positive developments, with the recent entry into force of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone on 21 March and the fortieth anniversary of the entry into force of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is to be commemorated on 25 April.

At present, nuclear-weapon-free zones cover more than 50 per cent of the Earth's landmass and unite almost two thirds of the United Nations membership. These zones are unique in that they are next to nuclear-weapon states, a move that signals a switch from passive to active disarmament. And most important, nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties strengthen the international rule of law in the area of disarmament.

We believe that the effectiveness of nuclear-weapon-free zones could be further promoted by closer coordination and cooperation among the existing zones. It is our hope that the second Conference of States Parties and Signatories of Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, scheduled for 2010, will mark an important step in this regard and will also contribute to a productive and successful outcome of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Following up on the first nuclear-weapon-free zone Conference, which was held in 2005 in Mexico, the focal point of Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status held consultations with the focal points of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the margins of the First Committee during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. Based upon the agreement arrived at during those consultations, Mongolia will be hosting a meeting of focal points of nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties and Mongolia on 27 and 28 April this year in Ulaanbaatar. The objective of the meeting is to discuss ways of promoting cooperation and strengthening the coordination mechanism among nuclear-weapon-free zones in line, with the Tlatelolco Declaration of 2005.

The provisional programme of the meeting includes review of the implementation of the Tlatelolco Declaration, preliminary exchange of views on preparation for the second Conference of nuclear-weapon-free zones and preparations for the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Taking into account the fact that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is an essential part of the effective and practical measures towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Mongolia is pursuing its continued policy of institutionalizing its nuclear-weapon-free status. We are pleased to inform delegations to the Disarmament Commission that Mongolia has started talks with its two neighbours to conclude the required legal instrument. On 3 and 4 March at Geneva, China, Russia and Mongolia held the first meeting to discuss Mongolia's draft trilateral treaty on its nuclear-weapon-free status. At that meeting the sides exchanged views on major provisions of the draft treaty and discussed the possible format of the trilateral agreement so that it would be in conformity with the existing commitments of China and Russia. The Mongolian side underlined that its good-neighbourly relations with the two neighbours formed a good basis for institutionalizing the status, which would promote further confidence among them and would be in the national interests of all three countries.

The Geneva meeting proved very useful for better understanding the views and positions of each country on the issue at hand, and the delegations agreed to have further meetings in future. We hope that these talks will result in the conclusion of an international instrument institutionalizing Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status before long.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, I wish to reiterate my delegation's full support for your efforts for a productive session this year.

The Chairman: I shall now call on delegations wishing to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Hong Je Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I thank the Chairman for giving me the floor once again. As I stated at the 295th meeting, I want to reply to the statements made by the representatives of Japan, the European Union and South Korea, who mentioned our peaceful satellite launch. As a matter of fact, I have no intention of talking about our satellite launch since that is irrelevant

to our deliberations on the agenda items before this Commission.

As the representative of Japan clearly stated, on 5 April, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea successfully launched an experimental communications satellite Kwangmyongsong-2 into orbit in accordance with the long-term State plan for the development of space and its peaceful use. The launch, the second of its kind since 1998, was undertaken completely through our own efforts and technology. Today, 15 April our people are celebrating both the successful launch of the satellite and the ninety-seventh birthday of the Father Leader of our people.

Our launch also enjoyed the congratulations of a great number of progressive people from around the world, and, surprisingly, only a few countries are making a fuss about our satellite launch, as if something serious happened. But hysterically and without rest this past weekend, having failed to block our satellite launch, those countries attempted to enforce the adoption of the so-called presidential statement.

I reiterate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's principled position totally rejecting that statement. Our satellite launch is just the same as launches that have been undertaken by those countries, including Japan. There is no justification whatsoever for discussing this matter in the Security Council. The discussion of our peaceful satellite launch in the Security Council, while actions to militarize outer space go ignored, represents a selective approach and a total denial of existing international law.

Today, the Japanese representative again condemned our satellite launch, branding it as a missile launch. Since Japan seems incapable of differentiating a satellite launch from a missile launch, it is clear that Japan is pursuing political and military objectives, such as going nuclear, by making pretexts by advertising our satellite launch as a missile launch. If that is the truth, it will be extremely dangerous.

The representative of Japan also mentioned the importance of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula through the Six-Party Talks. Japan has no say about the Six-Party Talks. It is none other than Japan that has been laying obstacles to that process, evading the implementation of its obligations and the agreements reached thereunder. Frankly speaking, Japan was adamantly opposed to the Six-Party Talks.

Now the Talks are dead, as Japan wished. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will no longer participate in the Talks. The other parties abolished the basis for the Talks with the adoption of the so-called presidential statement. Japan is one of those countries that should be responsible for driving the Six-Party Talks to collapse.

I also take this opportunity to urge the European Union to take a balanced and fair position with regard to the issue of the Korean peninsula. A one-sided approach by the European Union will only damage its credibility and result in the further aggravation of the situation in the Korean peninsula. I also strongly urge the South Korean representative, and through him, the South Korean authorities, to follow the path of national reconciliation and reunification for the common prosperity of the Korean nation on the basis of the spirit of the 15 June Joint Declaration, rather than joining foreign forces in opposing this same nation.

Honestly speaking, our successful satellite launch is a common achievement, in the broad context, for the Korean nation, and it should be valued by our nation. I believe that South Korea is also planning to launch a satellite in the coming days. I sincerely look forward to the success of that satellite launch and I also hope that the Security Council will not take issue with that launch.

Mr. Okuda (Japan): My remarks are, of course, in response to the statement just made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

First of all, as for the claim that the Democratic People's Republic has launched a satellite, I am not aware that even one country or any international organization has come forward with any evidence that there was a successful launch of a satellite that is now in orbit. But whether there was a successful launch or not is not a core issue.

Of course, every country has a right to use outer space for peaceful purposes. In fact, Security Council resolutions 1695 (2006) and 1718 (2006) regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea do not deny that country the general freedom to use outer space. Nevertheless, those two resolutions include the provision that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea shall suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile programme.

Ballistic missiles and satellite launch vehicles are derived from similar and interchangeable technology. To claim that a satellite launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea does not violate the Security Council resolutions reduces the meaning of those resolutions to zero, and therefore it is not acceptable.

At the same time, the claim by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that Japan is planning to go nuclear is totally false, and, of course, we categorically reject such an allegation. In accordance with Japan's own Constitution, over the past 60 years Japan has adhered consistently to a defensive security policy on the principle that it should not become a military Power, and, as all members know, Japan does not possess nuclear weapons, nor is it planning to have any nuclear weapons. We do not export any type of weapon to foreign countries. Therefore, the peaceful nature of our security policy is quite well confirmed.

It is regrettable that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea again raises those issues, which are totally unrelated to the item on today's agenda, which is disarmament, in order to avoid engaging itself in serious discussions on the very important issue before us. We sincerely hope that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will fully adhere to the contents of the presidential statement of the Security Council that was adopted this week.

Mr. Kim Bonghyun (Republic of Korea): I would like to exercise the right of reply in response to various incomprehensible arguments of the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

I would like to start by reminding the representative that, in October 2006, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea conducted a nuclear test and that the Security Council, in its resolution 1718 (2006), imposed sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and decided that it shall suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile programme and re-establish its pre-existing commitment to a moratorium on missile launching. In the resolution, the Council further decided that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea shall abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes, other weapons of mass destruction and its ballistic missile programme in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's long history of developing a ballistic missile programme and violations of Security Council decisions, combined with its nuclear weapons programme, is a matter of the utmost concern to the Korean peninsula and the region beyond. It is a clear contravention of resolution 1718 (2006). I would like to ask the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea what implications the combination of a long-range rocket and a nuclear weapons programme might have. The argument of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was that the launch of a long-range rocket had a peaceful purpose. That is not true. The intention is clear: to develop a delivery system for the nuclear weapons of North Korea.

The representative also referred to the peaceful project of the space launch of the Republic of Korea. Yes, we are planning to launch a space vehicle this July, but the Republic of Korea's peaceful space project is fundamentally different from the long-range rocket of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Once again, I say that the intention of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is to develop a delivery system for nuclear weapons. In contrast, we in the Republic of Korea do not have a nuclear weapons programme and are under the full verification regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the Republic of Korea is one of the initial signatories to the IAEA Additional Protocol.

Once the Democratic People's Republic of Korea complies with the IAEA safeguards agreement, maintains transparency in its nuclear programme and returns to the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we will be able to believe that North Korea's long-range rocket might have a peaceful purpose. At this moment, however, we do not understand the intention of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in launching a long-range rocket under very difficult economic conditions.

Mr. Hong Je Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegations of both Japan and South Korea referred to Security Council resolution 1718 (2006), adopted in October 2006, concerning our successful nuclear test. At the time, my Government clearly stated that it strongly rejected that resolution, as it was a product of the hostile policy of a certain country — the United States — against the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea. Therefore, my country is not bound by the resolution. That is the first point I wished to underline.

Secondly, the South Korean representative asked what the implications of our satellite launch, combined with our nuclear test, might be. We are talking about our satellite launch here. The implications are clear: it should make a very great contribution to the development of the world's space technology. The answer is very clear. He also said that he cannot understand the real intention of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in launching a satellite into orbit. If that is true, then he should try again and again until he understands that intention.

Again, we strongly reject the statements made by the representatives of South Korea and Japan. They are groundless, and we will never accept them.

Mr. Cruau (France) (*spoke in French*): With regard to something that I just heard here, I should just like to recall Article 25 of the Charter, which gives us the privilege of sitting in this room today. Article 25 very clearly recalls that the Members of the Organization agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the Charter.

Mr. Okuda (Japan): Very briefly, I am not ready to reiterate our position on the launch carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 5 April; I stated earlier the position of the Government of Japan. However, I have to say that we just heard about the intention of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to totally disregard a Security Council resolution. The Security Council is one of the core instruments of the United Nations, and I really hope that such total disregard for the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, will be addressed. It is useless for Members of the United Nations to talk about the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula unless we can assume that all Members at least respect the Organization.

Organization of work

The Chairman: I wish to draw the attention of members to the programme of work and timetable for the three weeks of the present session, copies of which were distributed at the beginning of this meeting. May I take it that the Disarmament Commission takes note of the programme of work and timetable?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.