
Conference on Disarmament

24 February 2011

English

Final record of the one thousand two hundred and eighth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 24 February 2011, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Pedro Oyarce(Chile)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I declare open the 1208th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

According to the preliminary timetable, with which we are all familiar, today's meeting will be dedicated to an exchange of views on agenda items 1 and 2, which, for practical reasons, we will tackle together, as has been done in recent years. This meeting will have a general focus on nuclear disarmament. According to the timetable I already mentioned, we should therefore begin a discussion that was already held in more general terms under the Canadian presidency.

A few weeks ago, the Conference held a valuable debate on this subject, which we hope will serve as a basis for an increasing focus on this issue, whether in the statements made today or in future work. We take note of the importance attached to unilateral and bilateral disarmament initiatives, but, as was said a few days ago, clearly these reductions in nuclear arsenals cannot substitute for a binding multilateral agreement that would enable us to completely eliminate all nuclear risk or danger.

General Assembly resolutions and the action plan adopted at the most recent NPT Review Conference assign clear responsibilities to this forum, the Conference, in this regard. The road map established at the Review Conference involves commitments by nuclear-weapon States that should also channel our debates in the Conference on Disarmament.

At the multilateral level, as we have seen, there are differing opinions on which approach to take. One option is to work towards an immediate and total prohibition of nuclear weapons, and another option is take a gradual, step-by-step approach. Between these lies the initiative to begin a phased programme of disarmament, with a specified time frame and the conclusion of an agreement on the production of nuclear weapons. In our opinion this involves engaging in more and more specific discussions on different aspects, and making progressive and systematic efforts to define practical measures to be taken. It seems essential to establish greater transparency and confidence-building measures. Still under consideration is the possibility of establishing a subsidiary coordinating body, an ad hoc committee that would handle this issue within the Conference in a more participatory and dedicated manner.

It would be interesting to hear your opinions on these ideas, which have been proposed once again in recent weeks. Are there any new ideas or approaches for addressing nuclear disarmament? What schedule or mandates should we consider when planning our future action in this forum? Is there political will among the members of the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a phased programme with a multilaterally agreed timetable for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and a convention on nuclear weapons? Would it be feasible to consider a goal of first negotiating an agreement on restricting the use of nuclear weapons before discussing a convention prohibiting such weapons? Should restrictions on the use of nuclear weapons start with lowering the operational status of arsenals, with a moratorium or with the delegitimization of such weapons? I invite you to present your ideas and not necessarily to restate what you already said a few days ago, even though on certain issues I must admit that it is politically necessary to restate positions. However, we can make an effort to identify certain aspects. We have a few delegations on the list, and I will give them the floor, but I hope some ideas will emerge from the debate, because this is the purpose of today's meeting.

Mr. So Se Pyong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, today I would like to speak about nuclear disarmament, the most important item on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. At present, the international community is faced with the pressing task of preventing a nuclear arms race, promoting nuclear disarmament and making a nuclear-weapon-free world a reality.

Although two decades have passed since the end of the cold war, the reliance of nuclear-weapon States on nuclear weapons has not yet decreased. In particular, some powers with the world's largest state-of-the-art nuclear arsenals seek to devise a new plan of nuclear strikes against certain countries and continue to make qualitative improvements in their nuclear weapons. They do not even hesitate to take actions which can trigger a new nuclear arms race while attempting to deploy weapons in outer space. This is an irresponsible and arbitrary act and, at the same time, a manifestation of a strategy of world hegemony based on nuclear superiority. This kind of act can never be tolerated. Therefore, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea holds that the international community must take every measure possible to eventually remove all factors which may bring on a nuclear catastrophe.

The goal of disarmament in general can be accomplished only when nuclear disarmament is accompanied by the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Therefore, the basic aim of nuclear disarmament should be to prohibit the use of nuclear weapons and eliminate them.

Nuclear disarmament is even more directly linked to the survival of humankind than to world peace and security. Of all weapons in this world, only nuclear weapons remain outside the scope of a relevant control mechanism. Therefore, non-proliferation, if divorced from nuclear disarmament, is nonsensical in terms of the aim of ensuring world peace and security. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains consistent in its support for the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons in the world.

It is from this point of view that priority should be given to an earlier conclusion of an international convention placing nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States under an obligation to prohibit the development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer and use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice issued in July 1996 states that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control".

Nuclear-weapon States should immediately stop the qualitative improvement and development of nuclear-weapon systems and adopt a comprehensive programme with an agreed time frame for the reduction of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. A strict and effective international verification regime is essential to ensure the irreversibility of the complete destruction of stockpiles of nuclear weapons and the process of nuclear disarmament.

The nuclear-weapon States declared their commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons for the first time at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. However, they have not yet adopted any practical measures in respect of their commitments. It is not possible to guarantee the promotion of genuine nuclear disarmament only through existing legal devices.

My delegation considers that it is essential to carry out bilateral and multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament simultaneously. Nuclear-weapon States should give up nuclear doctrines based on a first-use policy in respect of nuclear weapons, pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons, and respond to the call for negotiations aimed at concluding a relevant international convention.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will, with a great sense of responsibility, continue its efforts, as before, to make nuclear disarmament a reality and to further the goal of building a world free from nuclear weapons, a goal which was advanced by the late President Kim Il-Sung so long ago.

Mr. Roux (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you on your appointment as the head of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to thank you in particular for your words of welcome addressed to me. I for one am convinced that your professionalism and your knowledge of the disarmament machinery are likely to help us to make progress. Rest assured that my team and I will support you throughout your work.

I would have liked to have taken part in the meeting on the programme of work on 22 February. Unfortunately I was unable to attend, and I apologize for that. However, if I may, I would like first to make a few brief remarks about the programme of work.

Belgium is prepared to consider the adoption of a simplified programme of work instead of a programme of work that includes a programme of events and a mandate for each issue. We are prepared to do so on two conditions: first, an agreement must be reached without delay, and, second, this simplified programme must afford the Conference on Disarmament a real prospect for starting negotiations.

While wishing to see the substantive discussions proceed, Belgium strongly urges Chile to continue its consultations on a possible simplified programme of work.

We remain open to all solutions that allow for progress, such as the establishment of subsidiary bodies that you referred to this morning in your introduction.

As regards the issue that concerns us today, namely cessation of the nuclear arms race, nuclear disarmament and prevention of nuclear war, I would like first to remind, indeed to reassure, every one of you that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are a part of Belgium's international security policy.

The Kingdom of Belgium is convinced that to make progress in these areas it is necessary to adopt both a comprehensive approach and a gradual and sequenced method.

Non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control, together with confidence-building, transparency and reciprocity measures, are vital aspects of our collective security. These issues must be addressed in a comprehensive way in the framework of a holistic approach.

The goals of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to which Belgium fully subscribes, fall within the scope of this framework: the total elimination of nuclear weapons, nuclear non-proliferation and international cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

All elements of the issue that we are discussing today cannot be dealt with head on with the same intensity, even if we wished to do so. That is why a gradual and sometimes discreet approach focused on obtaining results progressively that promote and increase international consensus must be used.

Sequence also matters. As I noted last week, and as my delegation has noted in the past, the first issue to address, we believe, remains a treaty on fissile materials.

It is by taking a comprehensive, gradual and sequenced approach while paying particular attention to the promotion of common positions in the European Union and the initiatives taken with other member States that Belgium intends to contribute to advancing our work.

Mr. Khan (Pakistan): Mr. President, we welcome this opportunity under the presidency of Chile to exchange views on agenda items 1 and 2 with a general focus on nuclear disarmament at today's plenary. We expressed our views on this issue last month under the Canadian presidency, but we feel that they need to be stated again, briefly, to

counter the erroneous impression that a fissile material cut-off treaty is the only priority issue before the Conference on Disarmament.

Nuclear disarmament needs no introduction in this body. The Conference on Disarmament was created to save nations from the scourge of nuclear war through disarmament, to avoid such a war and to take measures to safeguard the security of the people. The overwhelming desire of the international community to make tangible progress towards nuclear disarmament is obvious. The legal, political and moral imperatives for nuclear disarmament are clear and compelling. No amount of obfuscation or circular logic can deny this fact. In objective terms, if a broad consensus exists on any single disarmament issue among the international community, it is on making tangible progress towards nuclear disarmament.

The focus on non-proliferation was considered an interim measure, while nuclear disarmament was the main goal; the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as such reflects the international community's commitment to facilitating nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, there is a growing impression that, with the indefinite extension of the NPT, most nuclear-weapon States presume that they have a permanent right to retain these weapons. Yet, under the NPT, the nuclear-weapon States are unequivocally committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Under these circumstances, the refusal of some nuclear-weapon States to accept any meaningful progress on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament is inexplicable and unacceptable. We could discuss a whole range of options and possible steps within the Conference if only some of the nuclear-weapon States would allow the Conference to move forward on nuclear disarmament. We cannot be satisfied with periodic reports of glacial progress in bilateral nuclear talks or emphasis on an illusive step-by-step approach. A genuine process of nuclear disarmament, pursued and negotiated in the sole multilateral forum for disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament, is essential. In any paradigm of cooperative international security, the promotion of nuclear disarmament will continue to occupy a central place, and this Conference is the best instrument for pursuing this objective. Although the powerful may be driven by unilateral impulses, they cannot escape multilateral imperatives.

The International Court of Justice, in its landmark ruling in 1996, determined that States are obligated "to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". The G-21 has in the past put forward proposals for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame. Let us work for an agreement on this issue.

Mr. Khabbaz Hamoui (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation is a member of the Group of 21, which has always held the conviction that nuclear disarmament is the number one priority and that, as long as these dangerous weapons remain in certain countries' arsenals, the world will enjoy neither stability nor tranquillity and global peace and security will not be achieved.

The draft decision contained in document CD/1864 of 2009, which was drafted most precisely and skilfully by the Ambassador of Algeria, was an important step forward in our work. However, changes in the international arena, particularly the breach by certain nuclear States of their obligations, and their ongoing development of their military nuclear capabilities and spy satellites completely outside any monitoring process, as well as increasing tensions across the world, particularly in the Middle East, all require us to think calmly about how to draw up a new road map and sound framework for our work.

I do not wish to dwell on theories which are familiar to all; I would rather move on to the practical points which you would like us to discuss.

It has become clear that there are now many countries, as we heard in the statements made on the 22nd of this month, that would favour or look favourably on the establishment of subcommittees to deal with the four core issues: nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, FMCT and PAROS. They would like to see the subcommittees start their work immediately, in accordance with the rules of procedure, particularly rules 28 and 29. We welcome this approach, and my country's delegation will provide more detail in the upcoming sessions on the idea behind such subcommittees and how they might operate.

My delegation welcomes the participation of observer States in the process to exchange and facilitate a convergence of views at our Conference, as these States will enrich our discussions with their input.

Mr. President, we support your efforts and all the consultations that you held prior to assuming the presidency. We welcome your opening statement and look forward to cooperating closely with you during your presidency.

Mr. Daryaee (Iran): Mr. President, we are pleased to see that a member of our group is presiding so ably over this august body. We assure you of the full cooperation of our delegation.

It is needless to re-emphasize that we attach great importance to the Conference on Disarmament as a single multilateral negotiating body for disarmament. Since this meeting is devoted to nuclear disarmament and we have already expressed our views on this issue, I would simply like to elaborate in greater detail upon our position in this regard.

At the start of the second decade of this new century, public awareness of this question has been drastically raised. The public will be vigilant in judging every move made by nuclear-weapon States; an unjust, self-centred, hypocritical attitude will not bring any more viable solutions for the new international security challenges. The quest for dominance and the mistaken assumption that "might makes right" have served as the best justification for some nuclear-weapon States to develop their arsenals, a trend that they have sustained over the past years in violation of their international commitments. The shadow of the production, stockpiling and qualitative improvement of nuclear armaments and the flagrant threat by a few arrogant States to use such weapons have dimmed the prospect of international peace and security for non-nuclear-weapon States.

It is a matter of serious concern that recent disclosures have revealed that, for some nuclear-weapon States, nuclear weapons are still a valuable source of deterrence. Despite their beautiful arms-reduction mottos, they have based their security on perpetuating nuclear weapons. They have remained frozen in the cold war paradigm, and their strategic calculations are in accordance with the rules of the game of that era. It seems that they are victims of their way of thinking, but the matter of greater concern is that the security of the world is hostage to this way of thinking. This policy is the main cause of the escalation of the arms race, since deterrence requires having an edge in both the quality and the quantity of weapons, which itself fuels the nuclear arms race.

In the course of the negotiations leading to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), an integrated and balanced package of rights and obligations was introduced. Non-nuclear-weapon States undertake not to acquire nuclear weapons, and to place their facilities under safeguard agreements. In return, nuclear-weapon States undertake not to transfer or develop nuclear weapons and commit themselves to practical steps towards nuclear disarmament. Moreover, all States parties to the treaty undertake to cooperate and ensure the implementation of the inalienable rights of States parties with respect to the peaceful use of nuclear energy in a non-selective and non-discriminatory

manner. In addition, the universality of the treaty has been assumed as a common international commitment of all States parties.

Since 1978, when the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament confirmed that nuclear disarmament was the highest priority on the disarmament agenda, the international community has had to wait for more than two decades to witness a comparable endorsement of its long-sought goal as expressed in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. The practical steps adopted by consensus at the 2000 NPT Review Conference still constitute the basic commitments for achieving the international community's ultimate and urgent goal of complete nuclear disarmament. The violation of these commitments by some countries should not be permitted.

With the adoption of reasonable steps at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, including the "unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament" under article VI of the NPT, hopes for the implementation of this fundamental part of the NPT were renewed. The rational steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the NPT were considered to be the most important achievement of the 2000 NPT Review Conference in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Since the 2000 NPT Review Conference, developments in the area of nuclear disarmament have not been promising. Despite their obligations under article VI and the undertakings of nuclear-weapon States in 1995 and 2000, the continued development and deployment of thousands of nuclear warheads in the stockpiles of the nuclear-weapon States still threaten international peace and security. The international community has welcomed the signature of the New START Treaty. However, reductions, as stipulated in this treaty, are far below international expectations for real steps towards total elimination of nuclear weapons. The treaty does not fully take into account the principles of "increased transparency", "diminishing role for nuclear weapons" and "irreversibility", which were agreed upon by the nuclear-weapon States at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

During the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the nuclear-weapon States committed themselves to "the further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons, based on unilateral initiatives and as an integral part of the nuclear arms reduction and disarmament process". In spite of that, no practical steps have been taken by nuclear-weapon States to reduce tactical nuclear weapons. Officials of one nuclear-weapon State have recently pledged an 80 per cent reduction of its nuclear arsenal. The international community has rightly expected such a statement to lead to implementation in a transparent manner. It should also be highlighted that any reduction of nuclear weapons, whether strategic or non-strategic, should be carried out in a verifiable and irreversible manner. Needless to say, such a reduction in nuclear weapons can never be a substitute for the main obligation of nuclear-weapon States, namely, total elimination of nuclear weapons under the terms of a legally binding instrument.

Today, although hundreds of millions of dollars are allocated to projects aimed at developing mini-nuclear weapons, or "bunker busters", the claim is made that these projects are simple research programmes. The international community has an urgent task, and that is to address the concerns of non-nuclear-weapon States regarding the development and deployment of new nuclear weapons and their means of delivery and to alleviate these concerns by considering the adoption of a decision on the prohibition of the development and production of any new nuclear weapons, particularly mini-nuclear weapons, as well as a ban on the construction of any new facility for the development, deployment and production of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery in home and foreign countries.

Moreover, the international community continues to have real concerns about the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons, their transfer to other countries and the deployment of nuclear weapons in the territories of non-nuclear States, which lower the threshold of resort to nuclear weapons and heighten the danger that such inhumane weapons might be used in conventional conflicts and against non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the treaty. Ironically, not only are some nuclear-weapon States not taking steps towards the total elimination of their arsenals and not giving security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States, they are also threatening to be the first users.

In accordance with article I of the NPT, “each nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly”. In contravention of this obligation, hundreds of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery have been, and are still being, deployed in other countries and in the air forces of non-nuclear States under the cover of military alliances. In the same context, nuclear sharing between nuclear-weapon States and between nuclear-weapon States and States that are not parties to the treaty is also a source of grave concern for non-nuclear-weapon States.

The international community has been persistently reiterating its unconditional global call for the full implementation of unequivocal undertakings by nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and for the establishment of the mechanism for assessment of the implementation of the 13 practical steps by nuclear-weapon States which was adopted by consensus at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. We are waiting for nuclear-weapon States to engage in good faith in multilateral negotiations for nuclear disarmament at the Conference on Disarmament, as it is the best place for the commencement of such negotiations.

We continue to believe in the need for negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time limit, including a nuclear weapons convention. In this regard, we reiterate our call for the establishment, as the highest priority and as soon as possible, of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament within the Conference on Disarmament. Such negotiations must lead to the legal prohibition, once and for all, of the possession, development, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons by any country and must provide for the destruction of such inhuman weapons. Until the conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention similar to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the nuclear-weapon States must honour their obligation under the NPT and immediately stop:

- Any kind of development of or research on nuclear weapons;
- Any threat to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States;
- Any modernization of nuclear weapons or their facilities;
- Deployment of nuclear weapons in the territories of other countries;
- Maintenance of their nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert.

Ms. Adamson (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for getting us off to a good start this week. I will be very brief because I made some quite long statements on items 1 and 2 earlier under the Canadian presidency and I have begun every statement on any issue by reiterating our vision of a world without nuclear weapons. I would therefore simply like to place that on record again. I would also like to comment, in the context of the programme of work, on suggestions that a fissile material cut-off treaty is the only issue that any of us care about. That is absolutely not true. At the 2010 NPT Review Conference, there was agreement on 22 items on nuclear

disarmament, which the nuclear-weapon States did not block. In fact, they were involved in the process of formulating those items. Ambassador Soares rightly keeps our feet to the fire by reminding us of those commitments and by expecting us to implement them. Those 22 items reflect a number of the core items of the Conference on Disarmament and refer to them in the context of a balanced programme of work, which brings me to my second point.

We have had a balanced programme of work on the table; we had it in the proposal set forth in document CD/1864, and we had it in the proposal presented in document CD/1889. My country did not block any of those proposals. We are ready to proceed on the basis of those documents. I therefore wish to simply state for the record that we are ready to engage on all of the core items, as we said during the sessions held under the Canadian presidency. I do not regard 22 items in an action plan formulated at the NPT Review Conference as anything small. It is a big undertaking, and we are conscious of the responsibilities that we have. In this forum we know that there is a balanced programme of work on the table which was negotiated across the different regional groups. It is not my country, as a nuclear-weapon State, that is blocking that agenda.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Algerian delegation will not take up too much time, as Ambassador Jazaïry spoke at length about our position at the meeting on 1 February 2011.

We are not going to mention the political and legal reference texts that stipulate that nuclear weapons must be banned, since they refer to an obligation, rather than a choice. Since the General Assembly adopted its first resolution in 1946, these reference texts have consisted in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), particularly article 6 thereof, the advisory opinion that the International Court of Justice issued in July 1996, the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament of 1978, which is known as the Decalogue, and the various commitments and undertakings made in the framework of the review conferences of the parties to the NPT.

I would like to reiterate that all these texts stipulate that nuclear disarmament is an obligation – an obligation to negotiate and achieve results, not merely an option. Over the last few years, certain voices and events have called for a world free of nuclear weapons. These aspirations remain mere hopes, because the nuclear policies and doctrines adopted by certain nuclear powers continue to support the role of nuclear weapons as a key element in their defence strategies and the defence of their vital interests. Such policies cast doubt on the credibility of non-proliferation mechanisms.

Algeria believes that the best way to eliminate the threat posed by nuclear weapons, which remain an unfortunate legacy of the cold war, is to adopt international standards aimed at imposing a comprehensive ban on such weapons by means of an international legal instrument that is binding, non-discriminatory and multilateral.

It is preposterous that the world's most destructive weapons are still considered legitimate. In that context, efforts must be made to identify a series of practical measures, including an agreed timetable, for the complete elimination of such weapons in line with the commitments made by the nuclear powers at the most recent NPT review conference, particularly those on their efforts to eliminate their own nuclear weapons. On this basis, Algeria believes that it is necessary to establish a subsidiary body of the Conference to address this issue in the context of a practical, comprehensive and balanced programme, taking into account all concerns of the members of the Conference.

The draft decision contained in document CD/1864, adopted in 2009, is an excellent starting point or basis for efforts to enable the Conference to meet its obligations and fulfil its role in establishing global peace and security.

Ms. Kennedy (United States of America): As we know, the Secretary-General has spoken of alternatives for achieving a world without nuclear weapons. Our country's President has addressed this question often; he has talked about, of course, the option of a single, overarching convention, and he has talked about the option of a series of mutually reinforcing steps. Now, I do not think that I will surprise anyone when I say that my Government very, very vigorously believes that the second option is the way forward, and it is this option on which we have focused our efforts. A number of comments made today have been addressed to nuclear-weapon States. I will, of course, let other nuclear-possessing States speak for themselves, but I would just like to say that it is an honour for me to represent a President and a Secretary of State who are such committed multilateralists, who want to use multilateral institutions, such as this Conference, to take those steps towards a world without nuclear weapons.

Now, in terms of a fissile material cut-off treaty, we believe that it is part of this step-by-step approach and that it is a next step, a step that should have been taken many years ago. It has been on the international agenda for many years, and we very much hope that we can take this question up. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons deals with general and complete disarmament, which should be the goal for all of us, and it is a treaty to which we are committed. We are proud of the fact that we have always scrupulously upheld its provisions. Indeed, we also believe that it is important to hold to account violators of this treaty that we take so seriously.

Now, references were made to the New START Treaty, which we happen to believe is also an important part of this step-by-step process. References were made to glacial progress in bilateral negotiations. I think my Russian colleagues can join me in confirming that, for example, the negotiators worked seven days a week here in Geneva, oftentimes late into the evening. Of course, individual steps take a long time. As you know, my Government, a democracy, must submit all of its binding agreements to its Senate. This is a time-consuming process, but it is an important part of the democratic process. So, again, this step-by-step process is, I think, one that reflects the real demands of democratic governments around the world. Of course, the New START Treaty was never intended to be an end in itself.

References were also made to tactical nuclear weapons. President Obama, for one, when he signed this treaty into law, spoke of our plans to begin negotiations within a year on deployed and non-deployed strategic and non-strategic weapons. So, again, we are committed to the goal of nuclear disarmament. We believe strongly that it should be achieved by means of a step-by-step approach. We believe that a fissile material cut-off treaty should be the next step and, indeed, if we were to start this negotiation tomorrow, it might be a glacial negotiation because, indeed, there are many, many serious and difficult issues that we need to tackle. The side event that our Australian and Japanese colleagues have been holding, for example, again demonstrates the complexity of the issues which we must all address.

So, once again, I hope that we can undertake such negotiations in this body as soon as possible, as well as pursuing, all of us, the whole range of interlocking step-by-step efforts required in this body and others around the world. For our part, we are solemnly committed to doing so. Of course, we are very interested in hearing ideas about how a nuclear weapons convention might work. How would it be verified? How would one deal with compliance and non-compliance and so on?

That said, we do believe that a step-by-step approach is the way forward, and we are anxious to take those steps, both in this body and in other forums around the world, bilaterally and multilaterally.

Mr. Suda (Japan): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving us this opportunity to engage in interactive discussions on important issues. Japan certainly shares the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We are willing to participate in discussions that take a longer-term perspective on what a multilateral nuclear disarmament framework or nuclear weapons convention, as it is often referred to, should look like in the future and final phase of nuclear disarmament.

I also listened to your introduction, in which you referred to various important issues, such as limiting the use of nuclear weapons, de-alerting issues and others. Japan is also ready to discuss all these issues in the Conference on Disarmament and any other forums. In this connection, I believe that the new nuclear posture review announced by the United States Government last year was a positive and encouraging step by a very influential nuclear-weapon State. However, the total elimination of nuclear weapons cannot be achieved in a short timespan or by a single convention. This process requires numerous concrete and practical steps. Among all the necessary steps, it is clear that the vital one is the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons. It is obvious, therefore, that the most urgent work which the Conference on Disarmament has to start is the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. It would not contribute to our progress towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons if we were simply to continue discussions on nuclear disarmament in general, and other issues, in general only, without engaging in actual negotiations on the creation of a total ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

So, as was agreed at the NPT Review Conference and as is stated in its Final Document and in many relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly last year, I hope we can agree as soon as possible — no, not as soon as possible, but rather immediately — to set up a negotiating mandate for a fissile material cut-off treaty and to set up working groups on all other important issues. As I have said already, we believe that the proposals set forth in documents CD/1864 and CD/1889 are a good basis for that purpose.

Mr. Novokhatskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): A clear priority on the disarmament agenda for us is to make the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) sustainable, stronger, more effective and more universal. We are pleased with the results of the Review Conference that took place in May last year, when for the first time since 2000 the Conference managed to adopt by consensus a list of specific measures, a plan of action, that set guidelines for strengthening the NPT regime on the basis of a careful balance of non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The Russian Federation is taking specific steps to promote nuclear disarmament. It is fulfilling its commitment in this area in good faith in accordance with bilateral agreements and article VI of the NPT. You have already been informed on several occasions about the completion of the ratification process of the START Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America, which was achieved with a lot of difficulty, especially for the Russian and United States negotiators. We are convinced that the implementation of the new treaty will help to promote international stability and consolidate the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It will also set the stage for further nuclear disarmament in a wider context and involvement of other nuclear States in Russian-United States disarmament efforts. In this respect, systematic compliance by non-nuclear States with non-proliferation obligations will also be important and help to bring about an environment conducive to real disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament.

We believe that, when it comes to the elimination of nuclear weapons, we can speak only about the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under conditions that strengthen strategic stability and strict observance of the principle of equal security for all.

Moreover, in our view, steps should be taken such as continuing the process of nuclear disarmament by all nuclear States, their gradually joining efforts made by the Russian Federation and United States in this area, preventing the placement of weapons in outer space, and simultaneously resolving other international problems, including regional conflicts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have no more speakers on my list. I understand that during the Canadian presidency delegations had the opportunity to make general statements. This is how I understand them, as general statements. The idea behind the subsequent debates is to focus our discussions as much as possible, but I understand that this is difficult. The issue is that positions must necessarily be restated.

Reflecting in this manner draws my attention to two things. The first is the need for us to give first priority to our continued efforts to find a way to begin substantive work. This is clearly related to the debate held on Tuesday and the observations made at that time on a programme of work. That is to say, we need to seek a practical approach that will allow us to establish, as has already been said here, a committee, a subsidiary body, an authority to examine the technical issues on which we already heard an oral report in 2010 and for which an ambassador of Chile also acted as coordinator in 2009. This is the first observation I wish to make. Secondly, I still think that we should aim to focus our exchange of views so as to prepare for the substantive phase as soon as possible. I believe these are the two ideas I wish to express today, and I hope that on Thursday of next week, eight days from now, we can also focus more here, in this room, on technical aspects of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Before adjourning the session I would like to inform you about the activities of the Conference next week. On Monday morning, 28 February, we will receive the President of the General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria and the Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria. That plenary meeting will begin at 11 a.m. — I repeat, at 11 a.m. — and at that time the President of the General Assembly will take the floor, followed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria and then the Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria. Afterwards, the idea is to have a brief period of interactive dialogue, which will probably be limited to 15 or 20 minutes. I think this will be a good opportunity for us to express to the delegations our concerns or messages about the role and responsibility of the General Assembly as outlined in resolution 65/93 on follow-up to the high-level meeting held in September 2010, and about the work of the First Committee in general.

I have been informed that the President of the General Assembly would be interested in hearing specific comments from the delegations on these issues. Obviously time will be limited, but I think it is a good opportunity.

In the afternoon, the President of the General Assembly will hold a very brief meeting with the representatives of the countries that will hold the presidency this year. The President has requested this meeting, and it will be brief. There will also be a meeting in the afternoon — the secretariat can correct me if I am mistaken — to hear the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

On Tuesday, 1 March we will have meetings in the morning and in the afternoon; there is a list of dignitaries who wish to address the Conference. The number of speakers requires that a meeting also be held in the afternoon.

On Thursday, 3 March we will continue the debate on fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, and if there are no more observations we will adjourn today's meeting.

Mr. Kelif (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Will the plenary meeting next Thursday take up the treaty on fissile material or agenda items 1 and 2 with a focus on this treaty?

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): As we explained when we presented the preliminary programme, the meeting will concern items 1 and 2. The document says “general focus”, so there will be a general focus on the fissile material cut-off treaty. While this is the presidency’s proposal, obviously, you are aware that under article 30 you have complete liberty to raise this or any other point in any meeting. Are there any other observations? If not, the meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.