
Conference on Disarmament

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English

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

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President: Mr. Hellmut Hoffmann(Germany)

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The President: I declare open the 1272nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before we start our discussion let me, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, extend condolences to our colleagues from the United States and from Libya on the killing of the United States Ambassador to Libya and three other United States diplomats and Libyan security personnel in Benghazi the day before yesterday, which was the day when we here in this chamber recalled the horror of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Their violent death is yet another stark reminder of the pressing need to make more rapid progress in bringing peace and stability to regions of crisis and upheaval. It is also a stark reminder of the fact that the instigation of religious intolerance and making religious feelings of others an object of ridicule can never bear good fruit.

Let me now warmly welcome our new colleague, Ambassador Waffa Bassim of Egypt. Madam, we look forward to working with you.

Also, it is an honour for me to welcome to Geneva the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Angela Kane, who will deliver a statement. It is the first time that Ms. Kane has participated in her capacity as High Representative in a plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. We very much appreciate that you have come to the Conference, Ms. Kane, and that you are willing to share with us your thoughts about the work of the Conference.

Ms. Kane (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): As I think you know, I wanted to visit the Conference in July, about two or three months after I took up my post, but unfortunately the arms trade treaty took all of my attention and therefore I was not able to come. Still, it is very good to see a number of familiar faces, and I am happy to be here on this day when you are going to look at the final report and hopefully adopt it.

The mandate of the Conference on Disarmament derives from the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The Conference was endowed with the potential to advance the rule of law in disarmament, and this is really a very unique function in the disarmament machinery of the United Nations. Over the years, the Conference and its predecessors have produced an impressive record of achievements. I will not list all the treaties. You know them well. They have served to reduce existential threats to humanity. However, these threats are far from being eliminated, and institutional challenges also need to be resolved.

As the 2012 session of the Conference draws to a close, I recognize with satisfaction that the members of the Conference have reached agreement on its report to the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. In this regard, I would like to express my appreciation to all delegations for their flexibility and preparedness to work in a cooperative spirit. My special gratitude goes to the President of the Conference, Ambassador Hoffmann, for his leadership and diplomatic skills while steering this process. I would also like to pay tribute to all the outgoing presidents — from Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, France and Germany — for their efforts to overcome the long negotiating impasse in the Conference. I am also grateful to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, for his many efforts to help member States move forward at a time when neutral and reverse are not acceptable options.

In spite of all these efforts, this session has once again reached an impasse. This disappointing outcome will be widely viewed as a setback in the effort to advance global disarmament goals, in particular the elimination of nuclear weapons. The difficulties facing the Conference on Disarmament are not due to a lack of commitment among States to the core issues on its agenda. The thematic discussions initiated by the Ethiopian presidency and held here for the last several months witnessed just the opposite. Delegations from 49 member States of the Conference, as well as observer States, took part in the substantive

discussions on the agenda items. These debates were supplemented by gatherings of scientific experts and diplomats in meetings on technical issues related to a fissile material treaty organized by Germany and the Netherlands, as well as by the Space Security Conference of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

Yet the stalemate continues, and I believe its deeper roots lie in the external political environment. It is difficult to commence negotiations when key policy priorities and perceived interests of States are in conflict, especially when some of these differences might also reflect domestic political considerations.

Overcoming this stalemate will therefore require a lot more than institutional reforms inside the Conference on Disarmament or simply finding a new venue for negotiations. It will require a genuine commitment by member States to build upon shared interests and to recognize that cooperative multilateral diplomacy focused on establishing global norms offers far greater potential to advance national security interests than self-help alone. Until this bridge is crossed, the “rust” in the United Nations disarmament machinery will likely continue to accumulate. But if this impasse persists, we should not blame the machinery. As former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld once put it, “Essential difficulties encountered within the United Nations are based on realities and not on the specific constitution of the Organization.”

I join the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament in recognizing that this difficult political environment cannot be an excuse for complacency. We all should expand our efforts to reach a compromise based on statesmanship and recognize the need to pursue shared interests.

Throughout this session, many States called for preserving the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body and insisted on its exclusive prerogative to negotiate on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues. At the same time, others believe that the longer the Conference remains deadlocked, the more it loses credibility and legitimacy as the central body of multilateral disarmament negotiations. They have also suggested looking at the possibility of taking some of these issues out of the Conference on Disarmament. A number of different formulas have been suggested, including pursuit of a fissile material treaty as a priority or advancing nuclear disarmament pursuant to a comprehensive framework.

Yet both of these goals are fully global in scope and cannot be effectively addressed merely through compacts adopted by coalitions of the willing. One of the most widely agreed standards of multilateral disarmament agreements is that they should be universal in membership. This is why the consensus rule exists. It rests on the common-sense notion that universal norms require universal support.

While many efforts have been undertaken to explore alternatives to the Conference on Disarmament, greater attention should arguably be directed to exploring diplomatic means of establishing a political climate that can enable the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations. In short, the failures of the Conference on Disarmament are not the failures of the Conference on Disarmament; they are failures of diplomacy. The burdens of real progress rest with the member States, not the forums in which they meet.

As a negotiating venue, the Conference on Disarmament and its predecessors have proven capable of negotiating multilateral treaties even during the negative political environment of the cold war, in conditions far worse than those that prevail today. What will it take to revive this institution and to restore its status as the single multilateral disarmament negotiations forum?

With respect to nuclear disarmament, this will entail a renewed commitment by the States with the largest nuclear arsenals to accelerate progress in nuclear disarmament.

At the same time, its members have to employ all available means to reach a common political will and to enable this body to fulfil its mandate. This is less a challenge of administrative reform than of reconciling differences among member States through diplomacy. These may include high-level consultations in different formats, new approaches to addressing key issues and, of course, the forthcoming sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, which provides the broadest platform to consider new initiatives.

It is no easy challenge. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pointed out in his opinion piece published in leading newspapers all over the world on 30 August this year, “the solution clearly lies in greater efforts by States to harmonize their actions to achieve common ends”. He also indicated 11 specific actions that all States and civil society should pursue to break the impasse. Most of them relate directly to subjects addressed in the Conference on Disarmament.

The thematic discussions during the current session have also brought forward a number of proposals which, if thoroughly examined, could help find a way out of the deadlock. All suggestions aimed at forming a basis for resuming negotiations deserve to be considered.

This also relates to the suggestion of developing a simplified approach, including the conduct of parallel negotiations on at least two core issues. Achieving great disarmament goals will require parallel efforts on several tracks, rather than sequential efforts leaving nuclear disarmament as the last to be achieved.

The recent discussions on the revitalization of the Conference have brought forth many interesting reform ideas that go far beyond a simple review of the Conference’s rules of procedure and touch upon the functioning of the entire disarmament machinery. In particular, I would like to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, for the proposals he made on 14 February 2012, which helped trigger the discussion on this matter in the Conference on Disarmament. Although some of his ideas were met with caution, there is no doubt they formed the solid ground for further work and may serve as a source of practical solutions in improving the operation and increasing the effectiveness of the Conference on Disarmament.

Now that another year has passed without disarmament negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament, Member States at the General Assembly will have to consider the fate of the negotiations on a fissile material treaty, of the rest of its agenda, and of the Conference as a whole. In this connection, I would like to make a few brief concluding remarks.

First, defending their national security is obviously a key priority of all Member States. Not surprisingly, they view disarmament negotiations through the lens of their national security interests. That is well understood and respected. At the same time, the security of each country very much depends on a variety of factors, which are often non-military in nature. National security is also linked to the security of one’s neighbours, and to regional and global security. Recognizing this indivisibility of security is the first and most crucial step towards advancing the security interests of all, at the expense of none.

Second, Member States of the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament have justifiably been proud of the Conference’s past achievements in advancing disarmament. The international community expects the Conference not to duplicate deliberative activities pursued elsewhere in the United Nations disarmament machinery, but to commence multilateral negotiations leading to new legal obligations to address some of the gravest threats to international peace and security, especially those arising from nuclear weapons. The world is facing new risks and challenges to our common security. If we manage to address the challenges of disarmament, we will be able to better create a platform for common actions to address these new challenges as well.

The President: I thank the High Representative for her important statement, and I commend it to colleagues for close study.

In this final plenary meeting of this session, we have to deal with the last item on our agenda, which is the adoption of the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament on the 2012 session to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

As is customary, I will invite delegations to make statements on the annual report before and after the adoption of the annual report. In addition, after we adopt the report and hear statements thereon, I will make some concluding remarks before the conclusion of the 2012 session of the Conference on Disarmament. However, before we proceed to adopt the report of the 2012 session, I wish to make some brief remarks.

We spent, all in all, nearly 20 hours considering and negotiating this report, which strikes me as quite a lot given the fact that this is an exercise done every year and much of the material in the report is routine. However, the fact that we took so long only reflects a diversity of views in this chamber which can only be bridged if and when all sides show flexibility and a readiness to take the concerns of others into account. I should like to remind you that the report before you is *not* a chairman's summary of what happened at the 2012 session of the Conference on Disarmament, but a report, which, as our rules of procedure stipulate, has to be adopted by consensus in this chamber. As we are all aware, achieving consensus is not always an easy task, particularly in the Conference on Disarmament.

I wish to thank you for the spirit of collegiality and cooperation which you have shown throughout the negotiation of the report and which you have extended to me. That said, I would now like to give the floor to delegations wishing to make a statement before the adoption of the report. I give the floor to the delegation of the Netherlands.

Mr. Verstedden (Netherlands): I would like to thank the High Representative for her important speech, which had, I think, a clear message for us.

I would just like to inform the members of the Conference on Disarmament that yesterday we submitted a report on the second scientific expert meeting on technical issues related to a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices, which took place at the Palais des Nations on 28 and 29 August. Many of you were present at this meeting, along with the experts. As you know, the meeting was organized by my delegation and the German delegation. Like the first meeting, which took place on 29 and 30 May, the meeting was based on General Assembly resolution 66/44. At the second meeting, verification and managed access issues were addressed. All in all, representatives of 57 States attended the event, including experts from capitals, as did representatives from the European Union mission, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Panel on Fissile Materials and Princeton University, as well as independent advisers. A letter and a report on the meeting will be distributed to all members of the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Ms. Kairamo-Hella (Finland): First, I would like to express our gratitude for the skilful and impartial work of the German presidency in coordinating the preparation of the draft report of the Conference on Disarmament. This has been a very demanding exercise, and Ambassador Hoffmann and his team deserve our wholehearted thanks for their efforts, and congratulations on the job done.

As Finland held one of the six presidencies of the Conference on Disarmament this year, we want to say that we have enjoyed very good cooperation and a very good working atmosphere with the other presidents, and hopefully this work has been able to convey the

deep commitment and the contribution that we want to make to the Conference. I would like to thank the secretariat for their tireless support for our work. This has been invaluable throughout the year. I would also like to thank the High Representative for addressing the Conference and for her wise words today.

Finally, I would like to say that Finland is ready to adopt the draft report.

The President: I thank the representative of Finland for her statement. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): May I also thank the High Representative for her statement this morning and join in expressing our appreciation to the German presidency and to you, Mr. President, for all of the very hard work that has gone into getting to where we are now in the adoption of the report. The adoption of the report is never easy, and I think that this is a reflection of the fact that after so long a period of paralysis and impasse in the Conference on Disarmament there is a real and growing sense that the status quo is no longer acceptable, and, as you said, it is important that this be reflected in the report. It is also important that we reach agreement and that the diversity of views be reflected. For my delegation, we did think that the initial draft report conveyed this reality, and therefore we welcomed it, but we appreciate that different views have to be accommodated. In conclusion, Mr. President, after navigating all these difficulties, I would wish to express to you on behalf of my delegation our very real appreciation for the skills, patience and energy that have brought us to this point of agreement.

The President: I thank the representative of Ireland for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Gil Catalina (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Perhaps I should take the floor once the report has been adopted, but I believe that there is also value in doing so beforehand. I am taking the floor, Mr. President, on behalf of Spain, firstly to thank you most heartily for all the efforts and all the time you have devoted to ensuring that the annual report on the activities of the Conference could this year again be adopted, and of course for the patience and skill that you have demonstrated throughout the negotiations.

I admit that Spain is not 100 per cent happy with the content of the report, but we are not the only country represented in the Conference. We have already expressed on other occasions our view that consensus should be a catalyst for decision-making in a conference and not a mere right of veto. This is yet another reason for supporting your efforts and their results, that is, the report we are adopting today.

Lastly, I think I should say a few words as coordinator of the Group of Western European and Other States, which is not in the habit of taking common positions, but I think I can safely say that the Group is also very grateful to you, Mr. President, for your efforts.

The President: I thank the representative of Spain for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would like to join those who spoke before the adoption of the report and to congratulate you, the bureau and the secretariat for the enormous efforts made and the time devoted to seeking consensus in this room. As the first president during this year's session, I can say that consensus has often been very difficult to achieve. I believe that this is also a time for reflection, because we are going to adopt a report that for many of us represents one more effort to seek consensus, but an unsatisfactory effort, given the contribution that this Conference could make to multilateralism and to an agreement on global disarmament.

Let me just say to the other members that perhaps in the near future we can move forward in the negotiations that are so necessary and so very much desired by the peoples we represent.

The President: I thank the representative of Ecuador for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Puentes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am taking the floor just briefly to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your quick wit, your courage and your commitment to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We would also like to express our appreciation to the members of the secretariat for the hours they have devoted to achieving consensus on the adoption of the report. We thank you, Mr. President, for the neutrality you have shown during your mandate, and we reiterate our congratulations for the excellent work you have carried out.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba for his statement. This seems to conclude my list of those who requested to speak before the adoption of the report. Does any other delegation wish to make a statement before the adoption of the report? As that does not seem to be the case, I would like to invite you to formalize the provisional agreement reached at the informal plenary meeting that took place last Tuesday, as contained in the document before you, circulated to delegations as an advance copy yesterday. The same document was issued today with the symbol CD/WP.573. This document, copies of which are on the table over there and have, I think, been distributed as well, is available in all languages. I would like to emphasize that if any blank space is left in the revised text, such as the day of the adoption of the report, it will be filled in by the secretariat. Furthermore, all documents that have been submitted to the secretariat before the adoption of the report will be added to the list of documents under the appropriate subsection. In this regard, the secretariat has asked me to inform you that any further documents must be submitted in paper copy and in electronic format to the secretariat by this coming Friday, 14 September.

Now, if there is a wish to go through the document page by page, I am happy to do so. I would ask you to give me an indication if there is such a wish. This does not seem to be the case. May I take it then that the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament in its entirety as contained in document CD/WP.573 is adopted? It is adopted.

The secretariat will issue the report as an official document of the Conference in all official languages as soon as possible.

Before I open the floor once again to delegations to make statements in conjunction with the adoption of the annual report, allow me to make a general observation myself.

The report we have adopted is strictly in line with our rules of procedure, which stipulate that the report "shall be factual". This is point 45 of our rules of procedure. I am convinced that, on the basis of this report, its addressee, that is, the General Assembly of the United Nations, will be able to appraise better than in previous years the true situation of the Conference when it addresses the subject in the First Committee in a few weeks' time.

Now, however varied the views of States may be on the Conference on Disarmament as such, its accomplishments and its potential role in the future — and we are all aware that there are quite a wide variety of views in this room — I have no doubt in my mind that there can be no disagreement about the fact that it is regrettable and indeed unfortunate that the Conference has once again, for about 15 years in a row, not been successful in accomplishing its actual task, which is to negotiate new disarmament instruments.

As to whether this state of affairs is dramatic or not and, consequently, whether it needs to be highlighted in the report to the United Nations General Assembly or not, is a question on which views continue to differ quite significantly. It is not difficult to predict, though, that the disagreement surrounding this question will be even more at the heart of intense debates in the future if the deadlock in the Conference persists.

Speaking in my national capacity for a moment, I should like to say that my delegation does not hide its conviction that we find the ongoing impasse for over a decade not acceptable in any possible respect.

I would now like to give the floor to the representatives who wish to make a statement after the adoption of the report. I recognize the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the Algerian delegation would like to welcome the Ambassador of Egypt and emphasize that the Algerian delegation stands ready to work with her in order to make progress in the disarmament process, in the context of the Conference on Disarmament and in other bodies. At the same time, we take the opportunity to welcome the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and thank her for her valuable statement.

Mr. President, the Algerian delegation would like to congratulate you on having so successfully fulfilled your mission. In addition, we commend you for your efforts throughout our consultations on the annual report, which have demonstrated dedication, objectivity, transparency and neutrality. Throughout the entire period you maintained a constant position in respect of everyone and fulfilled your role in the best possible way.

The Algerian delegation welcomes the adoption of the annual report for 2012, which will be submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations. The report is a balanced consensus document that, to a large extent, meets the requirements of the rules of procedure.

The fundamental point that this report underscores is that, in the course of this session, we did not succeed in giving the Conference the impetus needed for it to engage in negotiations on the essential issues before it. This failure means, in practical terms, that this year we have not been able to respond to various requests made by the General Assembly at its previous session through its resolutions. The Secretary-General of the United Nations entrusted us with these in document CD/1927, a letter transmitting the resolutions requesting us to engage in substantive work on a number of issues, most importantly nuclear disarmament — of which a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is a cornerstone — and to make progress on the issues of negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

This failure of ours will certainly be the subject of vigorous debate at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, particularly the First Committee, during which a number of initiatives will be put forward. We have no doubt that these will reflect a sincere will and desire to advance the cause of disarmament. However, we should emphasize that these initiatives must take into account all the issues entrusted to us by the General Assembly, to which I referred earlier. Taken as a whole, they describe a balance to be achieved between the different security concerns of individual States and groups of States. We hope that the positive climate and the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect that have characterized our work in the Conference will prevail over the work of the first session, so that we can step up our collective multilateral action with a view to making progress towards achieving the issues that I mentioned previously, which will also be the subject of General Assembly resolutions.

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, speaking on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. Khabbaz Hamoui (Syrian Arab Republic): The Group of 21 would like to welcome the new Ambassador of Egypt and also to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her remarks a few minutes ago.

Mr. President, the G21 would like to congratulate you on your success in preparing the report and on your able and wise leadership, which has enabled us to reach consensus on the report of the Conference. The G21 would also like to express its gratitude for the efforts of the previous presidents of the Conference this year and to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for his great efforts throughout this year's session. The G21 also thanks all members of the secretariat for their efforts in organizing our meetings and documents, together with the interpreters for their commitment and professionalism.

Mr. President, the G21 re-emphasizes that the Conference on Disarmament remains the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, and assures you that it will continue advancing the work of the Conference in a manner that takes into consideration the concerns of all States.

The President: I thank Ambassador Hamoui for his statement on behalf of the Group of 21. I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Amano (Japan): I would like to begin my short intervention by expressing the great pleasure of my delegation that the Conference on Disarmament has once again been able to adopt its annual report by consensus. Every delegation might not be completely happy with the final product, but it is a reflection of what we call consensus, as you, Mr. President, have pointed out. Although this year's report could not entirely reveal the troubles that the Conference on Disarmament is experiencing, my delegation thinks that it is an improvement on previous ones. Moreover, this is the fruit of the hard work carried out by all of us here in this chamber and in particular by you, Mr. President. Given the intense frustration of the international community, the weight of the task that you had to shoulder this year must have been an especially heavy one. However, you worked swiftly in a highly transparent and impartial manner to overcome the challenges. I would like to convey to you my gratitude and commend you for your tireless efforts. Last but not least, I would like to praise the secretariat and the interpreters, who supported the presidency and contributed to this consensus outcome. Their devoted work is much appreciated.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, my delegation would like to join in congratulating you and, I hope, all of us on having approved the report today. I would also like to welcome the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Kane.

I would like to ask a couple of questions with regard to our future work. I understand that we are all probably feeling relieved and maybe a bit relaxed because our work is finished. However, I gather that we must still consider the draft of the resolution in which the United Nations General Assembly will take note of the report. I would like to know your plans for the preparation of this draft resolution and its possible discussion.

My second question relates to the fact that paragraph 56 of the report, which we have just approved, presumes that the current and future presidents of the Conference on Disarmament will hold consultations with delegations to plan our next year's work. Ms. Kane in her speech very clearly outlined the critical issues that delegations will have before them in the First Committee. Earlier, the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr.

Tokayev, also very pointedly noted that if we do not get down to real work, then the future direction of the Conference will be decided by the General Assembly. In this regard, I would also like to inquire about your possible plans for organizing such consultations, and to take this opportunity to urge delegations to use the time remaining before the First Committee meets to discuss possible proposals for overcoming our crisis. As you know, our delegation has already made proposals in that regard.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and will address his two questions right away. On the first one, I will circulate a draft of the Conference on Disarmament resolution in the next couple of days, and I will invite delegations for informal consultations in this room, as is customary, and we will hold a first exchange of views. We will see how far we get. In my experience of three years in this place, I would say you can make some progress, but then I think one will have to continue this in New York because there are many interrelationships with other draft resolutions. However, I think it would be good to touch base here to test the water. This leads me directly to the second question. I will indeed offer my assistance to the incoming Hungarian presidency; I will say so at the end of my concluding remarks and, as requested in the report we have just adopted, the outgoing and incoming presidencies are expected to work together on the draft work programme. I am sure we will do that to the best of our abilities.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Switzerland.

Ms. Milenkovic (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, first of all, let me say how pleased we are to have Ms. Angela Kane, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, here with us in this meeting room. Her presence here today is very important, as it allows her to see both the enormous potential of this forum and the difficulties we are facing.

We hope that she will benefit from her trip to Geneva and will be able to see Geneva's full potential with regard to multilateral disarmament matters. We all need to take into account, in our deliberations, the very relevant remarks she has made to the Conference on Disarmament today.

We would also like to welcome the new Ambassador of Egypt, and we look forward to working with her in the future.

Mr. President, we would like to sincerely thank you for your sustained efforts, your determination to promote the adoption of a factual report and the manner in which you have conducted your consultations in this regard. We congratulate you on the adoption of the report just a few moments ago.

The report of the Conference on Disarmament is a very important document because it is the only formal document in which we can take stock of the current situation. It goes without saying that the preparation of a report covering a year in which a programme of work was not adopted, at a time when the Conference has for many years been unable to fulfil its mandate, is a somewhat laborious and frustrating exercise.

Nevertheless, we have managed to adopt a report on the limited activities we have been able to carry out this year. Above all, we have been able to reflect the discussions we held on the subject of revitalization. As we have said in the past, the United Nations General Assembly has urged us to review, study and combine when appropriate the options, proposals and possible elements for revitalization of the whole United Nations disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament, and this is what we have done.

Holding all these discussions on the state of the Conference is useful and necessary as preparation for the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, which will be responsible for taking stock this year of all the relevant efforts made to advance

multilateral negotiations on disarmament – even though Switzerland would have preferred to see the report reflect more clearly the situation in the Conference on Disarmament, which is very critical, and even though many delegations, frustrated by the stalemate, would have preferred a more clear report in this regard.

The General Assembly, when it sees this report, cannot but conclude that the Conference on Disarmament has once again failed to fulfil its mandate. In reality, much of the information in this report should induce us to take action to improve this unsatisfactory state of affairs.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your flexibility, transparency and patience as you led us through this difficult period at the end of the 2012 session, and for submitting to us a report that we were able to adopt today.

The President: I thank the representative of Switzerland for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Ms. Golberg (Canada): Mr. President, I would like to begin by echoing your words of condolence to both the United States and the Libyan delegations over the attack which occurred yesterday in Benghazi. I would also like to welcome our new colleague the Ambassador of Egypt. I and my delegation very much look forward to a positive collaboration in the years ahead. Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the six Conference presidents for their efforts this year to foster agreement on a programme of work.

I would like to speak briefly about the report that we have adopted today. First, we greatly appreciate the work undertaken by you, Mr. President. Your patience, dedication and attempts to find common ground were vital. The report reflects the necessary compromise. It is not as clear as my delegation would have hoped in outlining the nature of this past year's discussions, but it is an adequate representation of what occurred. Canada has repeatedly indicated that it strongly believes in the value of the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference has in the past played an important role in fostering negotiations on paramount issues of disarmament. Our concern is that it has not been in a position to play that role for some time, and we worry that countries perceive the raising of concerns with this impasse as somehow an unjustified attack on the integrity of the Conference itself and see the Conference on Disarmament as an end in itself rather than as an important forum for undertaking negotiations, which is, of course, its core mandate. As I mentioned several weeks ago, we perceive that the greatest risks to the Conference come not from those who express concern about its inability to fulfil its mandate and to seek to spur actions on issues the Conference has identified as significant, but rather the greatest risks to the Conference on Disarmament come from those who watch its slow decline, content with the status quo inertia, and who, most significantly, actively seek to misportray what is happening around us.

In closing, let me note that Canada agrees with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs that cooperative multilateral diplomacy is critical for overcoming the current impasse. Canada will contribute positively and actively towards this end and looks forward to working closely with other delegations to achieve this result.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, ever since you assumed the rotating presidency of the Conference, by using your extensive diplomatic experience and wisdom you have guided the parties through open, transparent, pragmatic and effective discussions culminating in the adoption of the Conference's annual report. For this the Chinese delegation wishes to express to you its congratulations and appreciation. I would

also like to thank Mr. Tokayev and the secretariat of the Conference for all their work this year. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Kane, who has come to speak to the Conference today. I also welcome the Ambassador of Egypt.

As this year's session of the Conference comes to a close, let us look back on our work over the past year. Even though we have not managed to achieve any breakthroughs, the parties have shown more willingness to push forward the Conference's work and have held in-depth discussions on the different issues and on the revitalization of the work of the Conference. This will help all parties to gain a better understanding of the issues and to jointly explore effective ways of breaking the deadlock in the Conference and promoting multilateral disarmament. The Chinese delegation believes that the Conference is a serious multilateral arms control negotiating mechanism. It is a forum in which member States can fully express their concerns and work diligently to reach agreements, and its authority is irreplaceable. We hope that all parties will staunchly defend the authority and status of the Conference, continue to have faith in and patience with the Conference, think more creatively and, through dialogue and consultation, make every effort to begin substantive work as soon as possible at next year's session of the Conference.

The President: I thank the representative of China for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Yusup (Indonesia): First of all, allow me to join my distinguished colleagues in expressing our very sincere thanks and high appreciation to you, Mr. President, for your tireless work on the draft report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly of the United Nations. My delegation is heartened to have the report of the Conference adopted today, yet the most challenging task is to beat the impasse in which the Conference finds itself. It is only with strong political will that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to resume its original function as the world's multilateral body for negotiating disarmament treaties.

Allow me also to commend the statement made by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who made an inspiring and thought-provoking statement at this critical juncture in the history of the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Lindell (Sweden): We would like to join others in thanking the High Representative for her statement and welcoming the Ambassador of Egypt.

My delegation is pleased that the Conference has adopted its annual report. The text is, of course, a negotiated compromise between divergent views. While we would have preferred certain language on certain points related to the long-standing impasse, others had other views. Against this background, we believe that the balance found is reasonable and the best possible one, and we welcome the report's adoption.

Mr. President, we wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you and your team on the way in which you have steered our work and on a job very well done, in terms of both the report and the presidency as a whole. Our thanks also go to the previous presidencies, the secretariat and the interpreters.

The President: I thank the representative of Sweden for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Daryaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me first to welcome the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and to express my deep appreciation for her valuable and thoughtful remarks on the work of the Conference on Disarmament and

disarmament as a whole. Allow me also to welcome the Ambassador of Egypt and assure her of the full support of this delegation in discharging her function here in the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, I would also like to join other colleagues in thanking you for your high level of impartiality, professionalism and dedication. We really appreciate your diligent work in presiding over the work of the Conference and in making the compromise which finally enabled all delegations to go along with this report as the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to use this opportunity to express our deep thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference and the members of the secretariat and all the interpreters.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Woolcott (Australia): Allow me to begin by thanking the High Representative for her thoughtful remarks today and also join you, Mr. President, in expressing condolences for the terrible attack on the United States consulate in Benghazi, Ambassador Stevens and his colleagues. I also welcome the new Egyptian Ambassador. Mr. President, I wish to thank you for all the hard work you and your delegation have done in bringing the Conference to adopt its report for 2012. Consensus is a rare commodity in this place, and it is to your credit that you have led us to it.

Mr. President, I am sure you will understand me when I say that Australia does not consider this document in many respects to be the factual report which the General Assembly deserves. It is a political reality that this is a political document born of a political compromise. However, ultimately, there is no ambiguity about the facts. We all know them. We all know the extent and tone of the warning which the Secretary-General of the United Nations delivered to the Conference on 24 January 2012. We all know the significant efforts the six presidents made in 2012, notably Ambassador Badr of Egypt, to return the Conference to its rightful place among productive multilateral institutions. We all know the results of those efforts.

To conclude my brief remarks, Mr. President, I want to thank you sincerely again for your efforts during your presidency. With the report adopted and the Conference's 2012 session about to conclude, we now have the opportunity to focus our efforts on the General Assembly.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of France.

Ms. Tang (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, we would first of all like to thank Ms. Angela Kane for being here with us today, and for her statement, which we will reread carefully, as the President recommended. I would also like to welcome the Ambassador of Egypt, and I am sure we will work well together in the coming weeks.

My delegation is taking the floor to warmly thank you for the work you have carried out over the past several weeks. You have done so with great patience, paying close attention to all the delegations, and ever since the first draft we have been committed to fully supporting you when the report was issued.

Admittedly, the result was not exactly what we would have liked to see. We regret that some of the proposals made during the discussions could not be accepted. Nevertheless, we respect the rule of consensus, which is essential in disarmament bodies, and we welcome today's adoption of the report of the Conference on Disarmament, a body to which my country is strongly committed.

We are pleased with the excellent cooperation among the six presidents of the session, namely the representatives of Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia and Finland and my own delegation, and we conclude this 2012 session with your presidency on a successful note, even though it has not resulted in the start of negotiations.

The President: I thank the representative of France for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Ms. Bassim (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I would like to offer you my sincere thanks and, through you, to thank my colleagues and friends in the Conference on Disarmament for their kind words of welcome to me here. I promise you that the traditional cooperation that has endured over the years between my delegation, you personally and the members of the Conference will continue, with a view to achieving the Conference's goals.

I would also like to thank you and your team for your work during your presidency, and for your efforts to prepare the report; we were able to reach a consensus report as a result of your personal effort. In this connection, let us not forget the distinguished addition made by Mr. Tokayev, Secretary-General of the Conference, to the work of this Conference.

I would also like to welcome Ms. Kane, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and thank her for her wise statement, many aspects of which are consistent with the positions of my country's delegation.

Lastly, I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to all delegations for their cooperation, understanding and patience during the Egyptian presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, which sought, as our colleague from the Australian delegation mentioned, to break the deadlock in the work of the Conference and to move it on to a more advanced stage, in particular in respect of the highest-priority subject, namely, nuclear disarmament.

The President: I would like to thank the new representative of Egypt to the Conference on Disarmament for her statement, and congratulate her on her first statement in the Conference. I now give the floor to the representative of Ethiopia.

Ms. Gebremariam (Ethiopia): Mr. President, first of all I would like to inform you that my ambassador has sent his apologies for not being able to be present today among us.

Mr. President, allow me at the outset to express my delegation's deep appreciation for the able leadership you have shown to enable us to reach consensus on the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament during your presidency. My delegation also welcomes the presence of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs among us today. As one of the six presidents of the 2012 session of the Conference on Disarmament, Ethiopia had the privilege of working with you, Mr. President, and with the ambassadors of Ecuador, Egypt, Finland and France. I seize this opportunity to highly commend them for their hard work, team spirit and commitment in trying to come up with a programme of work. It is, however, regrettable that another year has passed without the Conference on Disarmament conducting substantive work.

I would also like to express my delegation's gratitude to the various regional groups for their readiness and flexibility to accept and work on the schedule of activities proposed by Ethiopia in cooperation with the other presidents during its presidency, and to conduct substantive discussions on the agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament, including the revitalization of the Conference. It is our conviction that these discussions generated valuable inputs from member States, have helped us to identify and better understand the different elements envisaged under each issue and will greatly contribute to future negotiations.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Ethiopia strongly supports the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiation forum, with nuclear disarmament as its priority. Multilateralism in disarmament negotiation is the most dependable and inclusive avenue for concerted global action against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the dangers posed by these weapons to international peace and security. It is therefore incumbent on all member States of the Conference on Disarmament to work towards enabling the Conference to discharge its responsibilities in the future.

Mr. President, throughout the 2012 session of the Conference on Disarmament, the efforts of Mr. Tokayev, Secretary-General of the Conference, in assisting the Conference on Disarmament to be able to live up to its expectations have been invaluable.

Finally, our gratitude goes to the secretariat of the Conference for its support to Ethiopia during our presidency.

The President: I thank the representative of Ethiopia for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Strohal (Austria): Let me start by joining others in expressions of condolences and in welcoming our new colleague from Egypt. I would like to extend a special word of thanks to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, not only for being with us but also for addressing the need to develop a stronger political will in order to overcome the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament. This is a message which unfortunately needs to be made again and again it seems. This year, as we know, started with the Secretary-General giving us a similar message in January, and we have spent a lot of energy both here and in New York heeding this call and responding positively in order to find a way to start substantive negotiations, and we will continue to do so. My country and my delegation are certainly looking forward to working with others, both here and in New York, in this regard. I would also like to pay a special tribute to you, Mr. President, and this year's other presidents for all your efforts and patience. Thanks to your efforts in particular, we have adopted our report, although we would have been happier if we had something significant to report.

The President: I thank the representative of Austria for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Ms. Vuković (Croatia): Let me first join the former speakers and express our condolences to the United States of America and Libya in connection with the tragic events yesterday in Benghazi. We would also like to welcome our new colleague, the Ambassador of Egypt. I think that this is a special occasion today, with the adoption of the report and the address by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. I think it is a very good message for the end of this session and bodes well for future work in New York and Geneva.

Thank you, Mr. President, for all your efforts in the drafting of this report. Thanks also to all previous presidents. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for supporting the informal group of observer States in their activities relating to the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of Croatia for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Valencia Muñoz (Colombia) (spoke in Spanish): First of all, I would like to join the other delegations in thanking the current President, the former presidents and the secretariat for all their work. My delegation welcomes the final report, even though, like the other delegations, it is not completely satisfied with the result. As we end this 2012 session, my delegation would like to share a couple of thoughts with the other members.

First, the current deadlock — if not failure — in the Conference is obvious, and this assessment is accepted by a large majority, even though it is not reflected in the final report. In our view, denying or avoiding the problems facing us is not the way to overcome the obstacles in this forum. Only through realistic assessment and conscious acknowledgement of the Conference's shortcomings can this tool regain its relevance and importance, and I repeat, the Conference on Disarmament is a tool, not an end in itself. The objectives we are pursuing are higher than that; our priority is nuclear disarmament.

The second thought we would like to share is more of an invitation to other delegations to use these months of recess as an opportunity to think about our 2013 session. It is essential that we not forget about or dismiss the efforts made in 2012 or the various alternatives and options put forward during our reflections and dialogues. We must find a way to take up again the ideas expressed during this session, in order to strengthen the Conference on Disarmament, yes, but, more importantly, in order to fulfil this forum's negotiating mandate.

The President: I thank the representative of Colombia for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States.

Ms. Kennedy (United States of America): I also want to very warmly welcome our new colleague from Egypt and very much look forward to working with her. I also warmly thank High Representative Kane for her participation today. I also join in thanking the tireless interpreters, all the secretariat members, all the diplomats and all the presidents, including you, of course, Mr. President, who have supported the work of the Conference on Disarmament this year. I was not in Geneva for the negotiation of the report of the Conference, but I can well appreciate the daunting task that you faced. I understand that there was a frank airing of views. Whether or not these reflections of reality made it into the report, they constituted a valuable and necessary discussion as we close yet another year when the Conference on Disarmament has not fulfilled its mandate as the sole standing multilateral disarmament negotiation forum.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those colleagues who expressed condolences in this chamber and elsewhere on the murder of four American colleagues in Benghazi. I would also take this opportunity to express condolences to those Libyans who likewise suffered in this attack. I would like to quote my Secretary of State, who said: "This is an attack that should shock the conscience of people of all faiths around the world." There was no justification for such an attack, none whatsoever. It should be condemned unequivocally.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Libya.

Ms. Enemer (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, I welcome the honoured guests of the Conference. At the outset, on behalf of my delegation, allow me to offer my condolences to the Ambassador of the United States of America in respect of this disgraceful act, committed by outlaw groups, which Libyans and the Libyan parliament condemn.

Second, we thank the presidency for its work to make the Conference on Disarmament successful and for bringing out this report, which we hope will have a real impact on the situation and which focuses on a number of important points, including transparency in matters related to disarmament.

The President: I thank the representative of Libya for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Khvostov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I would, of course, like to thank you on behalf of my delegation for your professional work on finalizing the report, which we were able to adopt today by consensus. I also want to thank our Secretary-

General, Mr. Tokayev, for his contribution to the work of the Conference. It was very important for us to hear today the views of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and we are grateful to her for her presentation.

The report was adopted. We may feel some frustration that all viewpoints could not be reflected, but the most important thing is that we reached agreement on the text of the report and were able to adopt it by consensus.

Now it is important for the First Committee likewise to show wisdom in discussing this report. It is important for the General Assembly to show patience and deep understanding of the fact that the Conference is today the only tool that we have for hearing and listening to each other and discussing the prospects for negotiations on the nuclear disarmament agenda. Therefore it is, of course, important to preserve this body. Our delegation is ready to continue to cooperate to this end, both here and in New York.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus for his statement. Before I give the floor to the representative of Hungary, who is the last speaker on the list before I make my concluding remarks, are there any other requests for the floor? As that does not seem to be the case, I give the floor to the representative of Hungary.

Mr. Horváth (Hungary): Allow me to start, like others, by conveying our deepest condolences to the United States in connection with the tragic events in Benghazi and, on a happier note, to welcome the new Egyptian ambassador. We also thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for being here today and for her statement.

Let me apologize for the absence of my ambassador, who wished to be here on this occasion today but has to accompany a high-level delegation to a meeting of the Human Rights Council. He asked me to convey to you, Mr. President, our deep appreciation for your excellent work as President of the Conference, and especially for the fair and transparent manner in which you have steered our meetings and the process of drafting the report of the Conference to the General Assembly. We welcome its adoption.

My ambassador also asked me to convey to you that we will take a down-to-earth, realistic approach towards our presidency of the Conference, but will at the same time remain optimistic. Ambassador Dékány will be in New York for at least two weeks for meetings of the First Committee of the General Assembly, and, as requested by the report we have just adopted, will hold informal bilateral consultations with as many of the Conference on Disarmament member States as possible. Of course, consultations will continue in Geneva, and we also plan to hold, before the beginning of the 2013 session, consultations with regional groups as well. I hope, Mr. President, that you will not mind if we rely heavily on your experience and wisdom during this consultation process. Finally, we are looking forward to working with the other session presidents next year, as well as with every member State, observers, the secretariat and NGOs.

The President: I thank the representative of Hungary for his statement. I would now like to make my concluding remarks before the end of the 2012 session.

I said in my opening statement as President on 21 August that an acute sense of frustration and disenchantment has crept into this chamber over the last couple of years as a result of the inability of the Conference on Disarmament for some 15 years to get substantive work started, let alone finished. The signs are on the wall: from the President of the United Nations General Assembly to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Conference on Disarmament is being warned that it is in danger of losing its *raison d'être* and that time is running out. Of course, one can try to continue pretending that nothing much unusual is going on here and that what is required is only more patience, but I am convinced it will become ever more difficult to escape the reality of the situation. Just to draw attention to one warning signal: there are more and more voices raising the question

of whether the Conference on Disarmament should continue to get the resources it has been getting so far. I am afraid at the end of the 2012 session, in which a draft programme of work once again failed to be adopted because of an objection, there is no way around the rather unpleasant insight that it is becoming increasingly difficult to see how the Conference on Disarmament could manage in the foreseeable future to get going by pulling itself up by its own bootlaces. There are many who say — I believe quite rightly — that the pressing disarmament issues cannot wait any longer.

Colleagues, let me conclude my presidency on a positive note by expressing my thanks, which I am indeed very pleased to do. First of all, I would like to thank you, because, all the difficulties and frustrations I have alluded to notwithstanding, one can rely on the fact that an excellent collegial atmosphere prevails in this chamber. I made a point of trying to the best of my abilities to maintain that spirit in the course of the discussions on the report of the Conference, even if I have to admit, in all frankness, that at times one is at least tempted to lose one's temper for a moment or so.

Let me thank you for the kind words addressed to me personally. I was particularly pleased that they were coming from across the chamber, so to speak. In light of these kind words, I have to remind myself of what the famous American diplomat Adlai Stevenson once said: that flattery is fine as long as you don't inhale. My thanks go to my colleagues the other session presidents and to the presidents' collegium, which has worked together very well throughout the session and which has been most supportive. I am pleased that a draft programme of work was put on the table for adoption by a president and that we followed a schedule of activities proposed by another president in the course of this session, and that as a fellow president I was in a position to offer my advice. I would also like to thank colleagues who were helpful in offering me comments and counsel.

And, of course, I am most grateful to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Tokayev, whose presence is much appreciated, for his sustained engagement with the Conference. In this connection, I wish to thank all the members of the secretariat, under the able leadership of Mr. Sareva, for their invaluable assistance. Many thanks also to the interpreters, who were generous enough to let us work overtime on occasion.

I also wish to acknowledge my gratitude to those who produce reports on the plenary meetings of the Conference on Disarmament on a regular basis and by doing so keep the interested public at large informed about what is going on here. I am thinking about Reaching Critical Will and the News and Media section of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

Last but not least, I wish to thank the members of my team, Messrs. Reindel and Elias, for their unfailing support.

I wish to conclude by saying that I offer my assistance to the first president of the 2013 annual session, the Ambassador of Hungary, the representative of a fellow European country, and that I wish him every success.

This plenary meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.