
Conference on Disarmament

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English

Final record of the one thousand two hundred and thirty-third plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 18 August 2011, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. So Se Pyong(Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

The President: I declare open the 1233rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before turning to our business today, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome this year's delegation of Nagasaki Peace Messengers. The Nagasaki Peace Messengers visit the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Geneva every year to tell the story of the people of Nagasaki – the tragedy they faced 66 years ago and the physical and mental hardships that followed. The purpose of their visit is also to emphasize why Nagasaki must be the last city to be subjected to nuclear attack.

Now I wish to bid a belated farewell to our distinguished colleague from Brazil, Ambassador Macedo Soares, who has already left Geneva, and wish him success in his new assignment. I would like to request the Brazilian delegation to convey to him our deep appreciation for his many valuable contributions to the work of the Conference during his tenure, as well as our sincere wishes for success and satisfaction in his new assignment.

We have today a farewell statement from another departing colleague, our distinguished colleague from Switzerland, Ambassador Jürg Lauber. Ambassador Lauber was appointed Permanent Representative to the Conference in January 2010. An extremely professional colleague with extensive political insight, Ambassador Lauber will unfortunately leave us too soon, for new duties in Bern. On behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I thank him for his many contributions to our work and wish him every success in his future endeavours.

The following delegations have requested to take the floor today: Switzerland, Pakistan and Portugal – Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 21 and Portugal on behalf of the informal group of observer States. I now give the floor to Ambassador Lauber.

Mr. Lauber (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President, for your kind words just now.

I would also like to join you in welcoming the members of the delegation from Nagasaki to Geneva and to the Conference on Disarmament. I am very glad to see them here. I find their presence here in this meeting room most relevant and important, and it should serve as an inspiration to us all.

Mr. President, dear colleagues and friends, to tell you the truth, I always dread giving these parting speeches and that is especially so today because I still feel that I have not been here long enough to expound on the history, challenges and future of the Conference on Disarmament before such distinguished participants in the work of the Conference, many of whom are recognized and experienced disarmament experts.

Nevertheless, I would like to take this opportunity to share a few personal thoughts as I bid you farewell.

The development, production, trade in and use of all types of weapons — in particular when outside legitimate bounds — has a profound impact on all aspects of human life; it has a negative effect on State budgets, economic development, human rights, human security, the environment and other areas.

The feeling of security — whether personal or national security — associated with the possession of weapons is often misleading.

We experts in the field of disarmament recognize and defend the right of States to safeguard their security. This right is undisputed, but at the same time we cannot turn a blind eye to the human impacts that I just mentioned.

The world needs and demands progress in the areas of disarmament and arms control. In particular, it is time to completely rethink nuclear deterrence and to adapt security concepts and instruments to global considerations.

I share the disappointment that many of you feel over the limited progress being made in many multilateral disarmament processes, particularly in the Conference on Disarmament.

But I advise you against excessive and crippling pessimism. I call on all of you not to relent in your efforts. Your efforts should be constructive and should lead to a new beginning for the improvement of global security.

Multilateral processes are naturally difficult and depend on political conditions that change, as we all know, in unexpected directions and with significant consequences. In order to succeed, these processes need mechanisms that bring all stakeholders to the table and that promote favourable conditions for fostering shared political will.

I remain convinced that we have an excellent foundation for achieving immense and critical successes in the future.

In Geneva there is an unparalleled concentration of disarmament experts from States, international organizations, research institutes and universities, as well as NGOs. This provides us with a specialized pool of expertise that we must absolutely retain, but also make use of.

In the past, the Conference on Disarmament, which is currently under scrutiny, has proven its ability to act and has contributed to key elements of the disarmament machinery and to monitoring.

In order to be able to play that role once again, the Conference needs to undergo a modernization process that retains its strengths and remedies its weaknesses. Of course, it must continue to contribute to the security of the international community and all members thereof, but it must do so by taking into account concepts of security in today's world.

Indeed, the Conference should give consideration to the regional and global effects of disarmament and arms control, but it should also give consideration to the concept of human security, which centres on the protection of individuals and communities as an essential condition for sustainable national, regional and global security.

We are at a potentially decisive moment for the future development of multilateral cooperation in this area. I think it best to view such moments as opportunities that require us to reflect deeply and readjust our focus towards the future.

Overcoming the continued stalemate in the Conference must become our primary objective, because it is only through joint efforts that we will be able to move beyond deadlock to constructive work.

This is our joint responsibility, dear friends, and it should be our common goal.

Last but not least, as I look out at this gathering, I feel rather optimistic. Indeed, no multilateral process can achieve success without the technical skills, diplomatic experience and personal qualities of the individuals directly involved, and all these qualities are represented in abundance in this meeting room. It has been a real privilege and a great pleasure for me to be a part of this group.

I would like to sincerely thank all of you for our excellent collaboration and for the support and spirit of cooperation you have offered me and my delegation.

I am also grateful for all the support provided to this forum, especially by the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Tokayev, by his team and by the interpreters.

I would also like to express my gratitude and admiration to the representatives of civil society, who have followed this Conference with remarkable determination, especially our colleagues from Reaching Critical Will. I have personally benefited from their experience and knowledge and have particularly appreciated their valuable suggestions on ways to overcome the challenges ahead of us.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, I hope that we will have the opportunity to work together again in other capacities and I wish you all much luck and success, here in Geneva and in your future posts.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador Akram of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I have the honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of the Group of 21. The Group appreciates the skilful and decisive manner in which you are undertaking your work as President of the Conference. We are sure your abilities will continue to guide our work towards success.

The Group of 21 maintains that the Conference on Disarmament remains the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament and, in that context, the Group stresses that its highest priority continues to be nuclear disarmament.

The Group reiterates its deep concern at the great danger both to humanity and to the survival of civilization posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use and proliferation will remain.

We would like to recall, in this regard, that the very first resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, resolution 1 (I) of 1946, adopted unanimously, called for the elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals.

Furthermore, the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 1996, concluded 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.

The Millennium Declaration in 2000 also reaffirmed the commitment of Member States of the United Nations to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

The Group, while noting the steps taken by nuclear-weapon States to reduce their arsenals, reiterates its deep concern over the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament and the lack of progress by the nuclear-weapon States towards accomplishing the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The Group stresses the importance of effective implementation of concrete measures leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The Group, stressing its strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, underscores the urgent need to commence negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference without delay. In this context, the Group reaffirms its full readiness to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear-weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons, and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, within a specified time frame.

In this regard, the Group emphasizes that the fundamental principles of transparency, verification and irreversibility must be applied to all nuclear disarmament measures.

The Group reaffirms that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are substantively interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

The Group of 21 emphasizes that progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in all its aspects, is essential to strengthening international peace and security. The Group reaffirms that efforts towards nuclear disarmament, global and regional approaches and confidence-building measures complement each other and should, wherever possible, be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security.

The Group expresses its concerns about strategic defence doctrines of nuclear-weapon States and a group of States which set out rationales for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this regard, there is, therefore, a genuine and urgent need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies in order to minimize the risk that these weapons will ever be used and to facilitate the process of their elimination. In this regard, the Group recalls its strong support for the objectives of General Assembly resolution 65/71 of 8 December 2010 on decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear-weapons systems, as well as General Assembly resolution 65/60 of 8 December 2010 on reducing nuclear danger.

The Group reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Pending the complete elimination of such weapons, the Group reaffirms the urgent need to reach an early agreement on a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The Group of 21 stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), including by all nuclear-weapon States, which, inter alia, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. The Group reiterates that if the objectives of the treaty were to be fully realized, the continued commitment of all States signatories, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to nuclear disarmament would be essential.

The Group reaffirms the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in these areas. In this regard, the Group strongly supports the objectives of General Assembly resolution 65/54 of 8 December 2010 on the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Group recalls the final document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly — the first special session on disarmament — as well as the 2009 Sharm El Sheikh Summit Declaration, the final document of the Fifteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement and the final document of the Sixteenth Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Bali in May 2011, and reiterates its position as conveyed in its previous statements to the Conference.

The Group of 21 States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) notes with satisfaction the successful outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference and calls for the implementation of its action plan on all three pillars of the treaty, including those related to the work of the Conference and the Middle East, particularly the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. The Group of 21 States parties to the NPT re-emphasizes the importance of the commitment of nuclear-weapon States to accelerating concentrated progress on the steps leading to nuclear

disarmament contained in the final document of the 2000 Review Conference, and takes note of the fact that nuclear-weapon States agreed to report on their undertakings related to nuclear disarmament to the 2014 Preparatory Committee, and that the 2015 Review Conference would take stock and consider next steps for the full implementation of article VI of the Treaty.

Regarding the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, the Group of 21 States parties to the NPT expresses deep concern over the lack of momentum for convening a conference in 2012, to be attended by all States of the Middle East, on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, and urges the Secretary-General of the United Nations and co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution to immediately take all necessary steps for that purpose. The Group of 21 States parties to the NPT also recalls in this context the reaffirmation by the 2010 NPT Review Conference of the importance of accession by Israel to the Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

I would like to reiterate the Group's readiness to make constructive contributions to the work of the Conference and, in this regard, I recall the contents of documents CD/36/Rev.1, CD/116, CD/341, CD/819, CD/1388, CD/1462, CD/1570 and CD/1571, presented by the Group of 21 to this end.

In view of its strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, the Group of 21 reiterates that the following steps need to be taken in order to promote the goal of nuclear disarmament:

Reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of nuclear-weapon States to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons;

Elimination of the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines;

Adoption of measures by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger, such as de-alerting of nuclear weapons and decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear-weapon systems;

Negotiation of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;

Negotiation of a convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;

Negotiation of a nuclear-weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame.

Before concluding, I would like to take this opportunity in my national capacity to express a warm farewell to our colleagues, the Ambassador of Switzerland and the Ambassador of Brazil. Their presence in this body was extremely useful and constructive, and we shall dearly miss their sound and sage advice in the future.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador Andresen Guimarães of Portugal, speaking on behalf of the informal group of observer States.

Ms. Andresen Guimarães (Portugal): First of all, allow me in my national capacity to extend my best wishes for the future to the Ambassador of Switzerland and, also, to the Ambassador of Brazil.

On behalf of the informal group of observer States, I would like to join my distinguished colleagues in thanking you for your work as President of the Conference, and

for the inclusive way you have performed your duties, taking into account the views of observer States. During your tenure, important events took place. I recall the session with the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters and the General Assembly meeting on revitalizing the work of Conference that took place on 27 July in New York.

In this regard, it is worth noting that at the General Assembly meeting, the Non-Aligned Movement, the European Union and a number of Member States voiced their support for the question of membership to be considered. In fact, that means that over 150 countries expressed, in one way or another, their readiness to address the enlargement of the Conference as part of the revitalization package. If doubts existed, after this meeting it is clear that the vast majority of the United Nations Member States consider it high time to open a debate on this subject. The Conference should not ignore this call.

We also noted with particular satisfaction the statement of the Secretary-General of the Conference in New York. We fully agree that in order for us to seriously consider the revitalization of this body, membership is one of the issues that have to be addressed.

As you will be aware, the informal group of observer States has proposed the nomination of a special rapporteur to look into the matter in a timely and organized fashion. We take this opportunity to reiterate our proposal, which — we say it again — does not prejudge any particular outcome. Let us move from the present stalemate to a proactive and future-oriented approach. We believe that both observers and members share that ambition.

Mr. Benevides (Brazil): On behalf of the Brazilian delegation, I would like to express thanks for the kind words of the President and members of the Conference addressed to Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares.

Ambassador Macedo Soares asked me to convey a farewell message to the members of the Conference. He is now retired and living in his home town of Rio de Janeiro, and from Brazil he expresses his gratitude for the cooperation extended to the Brazilian delegation during his term as Permanent Representative.

On behalf of the Brazilian delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the support of Brazil for the proposal by Colombia to establish a working group to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We look forward to a constructive discussion on this topic.

Mr. Suda (Japan): I asked for the floor just to make an observation on the statement made by Ambassador Akram of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 21.

I would like to say how puzzled I was by that statement, in which the Coordinator of the G21 made a very comprehensive statement on what is important for nuclear disarmament. He mentioned the importance of nuclear disarmament, including a possible convention prohibiting nuclear weapons. He mentioned the importance of negative security assurances. He mentioned the importance of CTBT ratification.

We all agree that these are three very important issues we have to discuss, without excluding possible negotiation in the future, but I was really puzzled by his failure to mention the very urgent, important nuclear disarmament step of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT).

There are many United Nations resolutions and the NPT Final Document which mention the urgent necessity to start negotiations on an FMCT — which is really important for the future of nuclear disarmament — and I am sure that all or at least most G21 or Non-Aligned Movement members concurred with those important resolutions and the Final Document, which stresses the importance of commencement of work on an FMCT, so I don't need to get answers here. But I just wonder why the G21 can make such a statement without at all mentioning one of the most important issues of nuclear disarmament.

I would just like to hear, probably at another opportunity, the views of each individual member of the G21 on this particular matter, and I hope my puzzlement will be dispelled by those members.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I will try to address and hopefully dispel the puzzlement of my Japanese colleague. The fact of the matter is that the Group of 21, like the Conference, operates on the basis of consensus; what you heard me as Coordinator of the G21 read out is a consensus statement by the G21. He is welcome to draw whatever conclusions he wishes from that.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): In response to the enquiry by the Ambassador of Japan, I would like to draw his attention in particular to paragraph 17 of the statement, which addresses the outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which called for the implementation of the action plan on all three pillars of the Treaty. That language is followed by the words “including those related to the work of the Conference”.

I am convinced that the Ambassador is well aware of the outcomes under the nuclear disarmament pillar in the NPT context that relate directly to the Conference on Disarmament, which of course includes three of the core issues that we have on our agenda. I thought that maybe this explanation would help to respond to the comments made by the Ambassador.

Mr. El-Atawy (Egypt): Thank you, Mr. President. I do not claim to be speaking on behalf of the Group of 21. Our current Coordinator, Pakistan, is the only one authorized to speak on behalf of the Group. However, just to add to what was said by the representative of South Africa, in addition to referring to the parts of the action plan as related to the work of the Conference, the G21 is presenting the idea of the need to start negotiation on a nuclear-weapons convention. I would like to reassure the Ambassador of Japan that this nuclear-weapons convention will deal with fissile material. We promote dealing with nuclear weapons as a whole within the framework of the nuclear-weapons convention, which will deal with production and, among other things, the fissile material issue.

Mr. Hoffmann (Germany): I have to say that I think the Ambassador of Japan made a very pertinent observation here. I too was puzzled, and I want to say explicitly that I share his point of view. Even if, as we have just heard from the delegation of Egypt, the project of an FMCT is contained in the nuclear-weapons convention, we are all, I think, aware that it would have been good to hear at least the words “fissile material cut-off treaty” in such a statement.

I have taken note of the explanation of the Ambassador of Pakistan that this is a consensus document and that, as we all know, in consensus documents only points that everybody can live with appear. But can I take it that whatever appears in a consensus document would actually be applied by each and every party to such a document for and to himself? In that connection, I note with interest that the Ambassador of Pakistan — and I would like to quote this — said in paragraph 12 of his statement — I will just read it out: “The Group expresses its concerns about strategic defence doctrines of nuclear-weapon States and a group of States which set out rationales for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this regard, there is therefore a genuine and urgent need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies ...” and so forth.

I find it indeed noteworthy that nuclear-weapon States would make such statements, and it may be a matter of interest that they should apply these statements to themselves.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): From the outset, the Algerian delegation would like to wish every happiness and success to the Ambassadors of Switzerland and of Brazil, who are leaving for other destinations. We thank them for all the efforts that they

have made during their time among us and would like to tell them that we have benefited greatly from their contributions and valuable opinions.

The Algerian delegation did not wish to take the floor today; however, in view of the valuable observation made by the Ambassador of Japan concerning the absence of reference to the issue of the prohibition of fissile material in the statement made by the Group of 21, the Algerian delegation would like to indicate that it associates itself with the previous observations made by the Ambassador of Pakistan and by the delegations of Egypt and of South Africa. For the Algerian delegation, the prohibition of fissile material is an important issue that must be viewed from the angle of disarmament. We have previously set out our position on this issue comprehensively. However, as the Ambassador of Pakistan pointed out, the statement of the Group of 21 is a consensus statement and, consequently, there are some issues of concern to some delegations that might not have been given prominence. Moreover, the call on the part of the Group of 21 to conclude a comprehensive convention prohibiting nuclear weapons, including prohibition of the development and production of nuclear-weapon material – it can take up this aspect if such a convention is concluded. We also hope to hear the positions of the other groups, starting with the Ambassador of Japan and his group, on this matter.

(continued in French)

It would be interesting to hear the positions of the other regional groups on the proposal by the Group of 21 to draw up a comprehensive convention on the elimination of nuclear weapons, in the event that the proposal is accepted or that the Conference agrees to commence negotiations on the subject. The issue of fissile material would certainly be addressed as a matter of priority.

So, it would be interesting to hear the position of other groups on this subject.

Mr. Endoni (Nigeria): I am not going to claim to be speaking on behalf of the Group of 21. I just want to emphasize that the issue of an FMCT is dear to the Group.

In paragraph 8 of our statement, we came very close to mentioning an FMCT, and I am going to read that part of the statement: “In this context, the Group reaffirms its full readiness to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear-weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons ...”.

I think we came very close to mentioning an FMCT, so I want to join other colleagues from the Group who have taken the floor before me to say that the FMCT issue is still very much part of the concerns of the G21.

As I still have the floor, I also want to express Nigeria’s appreciation to, and to say farewell to, the Ambassadors of Switzerland and Brazil, whose contributions to the Conference have been very, very encouraging.

Mr. Lusiński (Poland): I would like to transmit this message as current Coordinator of the Group of Western European and Other States. We use coordination meetings for a frank, open, inclusive exchange of views, with no intention of producing a coordinated or joint statement. We use this forum, the plenary sessions, to express the views of all the member States, with all of the variety of views we may express on behalf of our States. I am glad to hear that we are engaging in a substantial debate.

Mr. Danon (France) *(spoke in French)*: I did not intend to speak today but I find this discussion, which was to some extent sparked by my friend the Ambassador of Japan, interesting. Two things strike me as interesting.

When a group makes a consensus statement, it has to settle on the lowest common denominator. I very much appreciate the remarks made by the representatives of countries

in the Group of 21, who endeavoured to explain to us that the concept of a fissile material treaty was indeed included, however implicitly, in the statement given. I note, however, that even when the whole international community considers the negotiation of such a treaty to be a priority, to be the next step that we should take, if just one or two countries do not approve its inclusion in a consensus document then it will not be included.

This naturally brings me to the statement made by my friend and colleague from Algeria, who asked us to react to the proposals, in particular the six points at the end of the statement by the Group of 21. This discussion has already taken place at the NPT Review Conference.

I recall that the issue of a comprehensive convention was again discussed extensively, and that it was not included in the action plan.

I am very aware that the NPT does not represent the entire international community, but the action plan that was adopted provides us with a kind of road map for our work for the next five years.

What you are doing by putting the issue of a comprehensive convention, or a universal convention on negative security assurances, back on the table is interesting — intellectually interesting, might I say — but you cannot put this back on the table and reasonably expect that this is going to happen in the next five years, especially when we have 64 measures to implement under the NPT (see document NPT/CONF.2010/50 (vol. I)) which do not include the measures that you are talking about.

Therefore, it seems to me that when everyone agrees that nuclear disarmament is a gradual process and when the entire international community — apart from one or maybe two countries — wants to start working on a fissile material cut-off treaty, that is what we should be working on, not on other proposals that are much less likely to succeed.

So I urge all my colleagues not to lose sight of the main objective we have set for ourselves, namely starting negotiations on a fissile material treaty as soon as possible; let us save for other, but more informal, discussions — if we feel the need to have them — the issue of other negotiations which, in my opinion, have little chance of starting in the next few years.

I would just like to say before I conclude that I certainly support what was said by other colleagues and by the President regarding the departure of our colleagues from Switzerland and Brazil. We will miss their always highly pertinent and constructive contributions to the Conference on Disarmament and other forums. I wish both of them all the best in the new phase in their lives that they are embarking on today.

Mr. Rao (India): It was not my intention to take the floor, but since observations have been made by my colleagues on the issue being discussed here, I thought I would ask for the floor and make a few observations. The Conference on Disarmament, as we have said again and again, is the sole multilateral negotiating forum available to the international community. And I think it is a standing forum which provides an opportunity to identify issues and build international consensus on them.

The statement of the Group of 21 read out by the Ambassador of Pakistan contains very important ideas which I think all of us should think about and see how we can move forward.

As regards the issue of an FMCT, as everyone here knows, we have presented our positions in the Conference plenary several times during the course of the year. And, as the representative of Poland said, in the Group of Western European and Other States they do not have coordinated positions and the plenary meetings are used to allow delegations to express their views.

Similarly, we have had lots of discussions, and I think we should focus here on issues which unite us, which help us in taking forward the international disarmament agenda, rather than issues on which there are differences. Bringing them into focus would help us in moving forward. That would help us in developing international consensus so that the Conference can get back to the work which it is supposed to do, that is, to negotiate disarmament treaties.

Let me also join my other colleagues in bidding farewell to the Ambassador of Switzerland and Ambassador Macedo Soares, who made immense contributions to the work of the Conference and who will surely be missed by all of us.

The President: Since this is the last plenary meeting under the presidency of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, allow me to make some closing remarks.

I said in my opening remarks on 28 June 2011, when assuming the presidency, that I would do everything in my capacity to move the work of the Conference forward by cooperating closely with the delegations. As promised, I conducted bilateral consultations with nearly all delegations in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, even during the intersessional period. The focus of my consultations and discussions with the delegations was on how to revitalize the Conference and what kind of useful work we should do in the absence of a consensus on the issue of the programme of work. I also held informal meetings with intergovernmental organizations to exchange views on common concerns regarding the enlargement of the Conference.

During the course of consultations and discussions, I perceived that gaps between the delegations were too wide to be bridged at this moment, due to a divergence of views on the substantive issues. I also perceived that there are a lot of misunderstandings between delegations and between groups involving each other's positions with regard to a possible programme of work. Different delegations and different groups have different priorities on the various issues, with the majority emphasizing nuclear disarmament, others an FMCT, prevention of an arms race in outer space, negative security assurances and so on.

We have achieved no concrete results, despite all our efforts. This is due to the lack of political will on the part of the member States, not to the inherent inefficiency of the Conference, in our view.

I do believe that the Conference, as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, is capable of producing multilateral agreements, should the member States fully demonstrate their political will and have a mandate to do so.

I am very much committed to the Conference on Disarmament and, as the current President, I am thankful to Colombia for its proposal on the creation of a working group within the Conference. The main thrust of this proposal is to consider possible actions to strengthen the work of the Conference. Member States are very flexible regarding this proposal. It is true that this proposal is not entirely satisfactory, but I do believe that it is workable. As I have already informed the delegations through the regional coordinators, I shall leave this matter for the member States to decide at the opportune time.

Regarding the development of the Conference outside the body, outside this mechanism, we must first look at the real effect and consequences of that development. Does it help to achieve the objective of revitalizing the work of the Conference? How can it be more effective? I believe that we must rely on a member State-driven approach, by listening to the opinions of all delegations on strengthening the credibility of the Conference, respecting and upholding the rules of procedure and giving equal weight to the legitimate security concerns of all countries.

I do believe that there is no alternative to the Conference at this stage. I sincerely believe that multilateral diplomacy is the best vehicle for advancing the work of the

Conference, and it can play a fundamental role in collective security. Therefore, we should work together in a positive atmosphere to strengthen its work and role as the sole multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament.

I would like once again to express my profound thanks to all delegations for their support and cooperation as well as for their important contributions. I also wish to convey my deep appreciation to Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, for his valuable support not only in providing conference facilities and services but also in assisting me in the performance of my duties. My most sincere thanks also go to Mr. Jarmo Sareva, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, as well as to Mr. Valère Mantels, Secretary to the Conference, and to other members of the secretariat. Without their support and assistance, it would have been impossible to complete my difficult tasks. I also thank the simultaneous interpreters, who have worked long hours to provide interpretation services at formal and informal meetings.

My best wishes are, of course, reserved for the incoming president, Ambassador Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez of Cuba, and his delegation. It is unnecessary for me even to assure him that he can always count on the support and cooperation of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I thank you all very much.

Mr. Wang Qun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, the Chinese delegation would like to express its appreciation to the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and to Ambassador So Se Pyong in particular, for their tireless efforts and effective work during their country's presidency. Ambassador So Se Pyong, using his excellent leadership skills and vast experience in multilateral diplomacy and adopting an inclusive, transparent and pragmatic approach, and acting in accordance with the rules of procedure, has done everything within his power to push the parties forward in the quest for consensus on the core issue of a programme of work and to carry out useful discussions focusing on ways to proceed with the work of the Conference and other major issues. The Chinese delegation would like to thank the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for these constructive efforts.

China has consistently supported the early adoption of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work acceptable to all parties through broad, open, and transparent intergovernmental consultations, in accordance with the rules of procedure, and the early start of substantive work in the Conference, including in the negotiations on an FMCT. We hope that the parties will continue to work hard towards those objectives. On this occasion, China would like to welcome the Ambassador of Cuba as the incoming President and offer him our full support during his presidency.

Lastly, the Chinese delegation, like many other delegations before us, would like to express our regret over the departure of Ambassador Lauber of Switzerland and Ambassador Macedo Soares of Brazil. We thank them for their constructive work and contributions during their time with the Conference, and we wish them all the best in their new posts and many blessings for them and their families.

Mr. Puentes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, first of all, allow me to offer the most sincere apology on behalf of Ambassador Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez, who has been instructed by our capital to take urgent action on certain matters and is therefore unable to attend this plenary meeting. The Ambassador has asked me personally to congratulate you on the wise manner in which you have conducted your presidency, and in particular on the flexibility with which you have led the P6 meetings, as well as your willingness to accept proposals that might enable the Conference to move forward. Given that this is the last plenary meeting over which you will preside, we congratulate you once again and assure you that Cuba will continue your work when it takes over the presidency

from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and in that regard we thank you for your cooperation and the personal experiences you have shared with us.

The President: This concludes our business for today.

The next plenary meeting will be held under the presidency of Cuba on Tuesday, 23 August, at 10 a.m. in this chamber. At that time, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Moreno Fernández, will address the Conference.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.