
Conference on Disarmament

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English

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

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President: Mr. Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call to order the 1234th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. First of all, I would like to welcome, personally, and on behalf of the Conference, Ambassador Moncef Baati, Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations Office at Geneva. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to the participants in the 2011 United Nations Programme of Fellowship on Disarmament who are attending this plenary meeting as observers. I am sure that they will benefit from attending our forum, and especially from hearing the statements that will be made on the different aspects of the work of the Conference. I wish them a fruitful stay in Geneva and hope that their presence here will help to revitalize this body.

Allow me to extend a special welcome personally and on behalf of the Conference to the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, Mr. Abelardo Moreno Fernández. Mr. Moreno Fernández has served as Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba since 2000. He has carried out many tasks in the field of multilateral diplomacy; indeed, he has more than 50 years of experience in this area. He has worked at the permanent missions in Geneva and New York and has served on many other multilateral diplomatic missions. In New York he has worked in several capacities, including as Permanent Representative of Cuba at the mission there. I am confident that we will benefit from his vast experience. Your Excellency, I give you the floor so that you may address the Conference.

Mr. Moreno Fernández (Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. In reality, it is not the experience of any one person that is going to help revitalize the Conference on Disarmament. I believe that what will help is collective experience, collaborative work, good faith, collective goodwill and above all the political will to advance the work of this important body. Allow me to officially begin my statement.

Your Excellency, Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, distinguished representatives of the member and observer States of this Conference, Cuba takes seriously its commitment to assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in this historic meeting room where the Council of the League of Nations once met, as a precursor of the United Nations in its efforts to maintain international peace and security. Fulfilling the purpose set out in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations has become increasingly challenging in the midst of a complex international situation marked by crises of various types and origins that threaten not only the necessary international stability but also the very existence of humankind. Despite the acute economic crisis that the world is facing, and that is hitting developing countries the hardest, military expenditures, rather than decreasing, are rapidly increasing each year. A single country is responsible for almost half of global military spending.

While tens of millions of victims of poverty and preventable and curable diseases die in silence, enormous amounts of resources continue to be used to carry out modern wars of conquest that result in thousands of deaths. The worsening of living conditions on earth as a result of climate change, and the existence of nuclear weapons, are the main threats to the survival of the human species today.

On 1 March 2011, in this same meeting room, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba reminded us that the first resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, on 24 January 1946, called for “the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction”.

The Conference on Disarmament, of which Cuba is an active member and is honoured to preside over from today, plays an irreplaceable role as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Not only is this body extremely relevant and important, it

also brings together a vast amount of experience and knowledge to promote the cause of disarmament, and those resources must not be wasted. It is worrying that the Conference has been unable to carry out substantive work for more than a decade. Some insist that this is due to its working methods and rules of procedure; we do not agree. The most convincing proof of the fallacy of this view is that what is happening in the Conference is by no means an isolated event within the disarmament machinery.

It is no coincidence that, for the twelfth year in a row, the United Nations Disarmament Commission has once again concluded its work this year in New York without adopting any substantive recommendations. Nor is it a coincidence that every year the First Committee of the General Assembly continues to adopt dozens of resolutions that are simply not implemented, particularly those relating to nuclear disarmament. Nor that a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament has still not been convened, despite the Non-Aligned Movement's repeated calls for such a session for many years now.

Cuba supports the idea of improving the United Nations disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament, but we are convinced that the paralysis currently afflicting a large part of the disarmament machinery is primarily due to a lack of political will among some States to achieve real progress, particularly in the field of nuclear disarmament. At the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, the States Members of the United Nations gave this forum the mandate of negotiating multilateral disarmament treaties. The Conference has failed to fulfil this mandate with regard to nuclear disarmament. The mere existence of nuclear weapons and of doctrines advocating possession and use of them constitute a grave threat to international peace and security. It is simply unacceptable that there are nearly 23,000 nuclear weapons in the world today, 7,560 of which are ready for immediate use. Therefore, nuclear disarmament is and must continue to be the highest priority in the field of disarmament. We believe that consensus should be built within the Conference on this basis.

Distinguished delegates, the Conference can and should adopt, as soon as possible, a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that incorporates the real priorities in the field of disarmament. In this context, we call on all member States to show the necessary flexibility, while respecting the rules of procedure and constructive dialogue.

We are convinced that the Conference has the capacity to negotiate in parallel a treaty which eliminates and prohibits nuclear weapons, a treaty prohibiting the arms race in outer space, a treaty providing effective security assurances for States which, like Cuba, do not possess nuclear weapons, and a treaty which prohibits the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Cuba believes that the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons would be a positive but inadequate step if subsequent steps to achieve nuclear disarmament are not defined.

The Non-Aligned Movement has submitted a proposal that merits consideration and that includes an action plan with a specific timetable for the gradual reduction of nuclear weapons, culminating in their total elimination and prohibition by 2025 at the latest. The proposal also calls for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. There is an urgent need for such a zone in the Middle East, and its establishment would truly contribute to durable peace in the region, which is currently in upheaval.

The Group of 21, for its part, has pointed out the urgent need to eliminate the threat to international security posed by nuclear weapons and has called on the members of the Conference on Disarmament to adopt and implement a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that is based on its agenda and includes the core issues, in accordance with its rules of procedure and taking into account all States' security concerns.

Your Excellencies, we have participated in and closely followed the high-level meetings of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, including the most recent one held from 27 to 29 July in New York in follow-up to the one held on 24 September 2010. We note with concern the statements made at these meetings by certain delegations asserting that the time has come to abandon the Conference and resort to alternative negotiating processes. Replacing the Conference with improvised and selective ad hoc arrangements that fall outside the framework of the United Nations and are controlled by a small number of countries would be a dangerous step backwards. The solution is not to ignore this body or minimize its importance; on the contrary, now more than ever we all have the responsibility to preserve and strengthen it. Solutions that have been agreed multilaterally, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, are the only sustainable means of addressing disarmament and international security issues.

Distinguished members of the Conference on Disarmament, it is time to fulfil this forum's mandate. We must urgently begin our substantive work and guarantee the right of all human beings and peoples to live in peace in a world without nuclear weapons or wars of aggression. Let us use the astronomical amount of 1.5 trillion dollars that is currently allocated to military spending and wasted on means of warfare to instead promote life and development.

Cuba takes on the responsibility of presiding over this forum determined to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament does not lose its relevance through stagnation and lack of political will. This will be possible only if all members of the Conference do their part, as it is up to us to demonstrate our true commitment to disarmament and peace through our practical action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Deputy Minister Fernández for his words and his presence here before this body, which clearly illustrates the support of Cuba for the work of this Conference. Before I start the list of speakers, I would like to share some information with the member and observer States and with the rest of those present in the meeting room about how we plan to conduct our work in the coming weeks.

First of all, I would like to acknowledge what has been done by the ambassadors who have assumed the presidency of the Conference this year, starting with the ambassador of Canada, followed by the ambassadors of Chile, China, Colombia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, from whom I am now taking over as President. As ours is the last of the presidencies, our job is basically to recapitulate the work done. This means that, as we all know, our priority will be to adopt the report on the work of the Conference. We believe that we will be able to accomplish this as swiftly as possible by following the principles that, in my delegation's view, are fundamental to this body's work. The first of those principles is, of course, transparency. We are going to try to conduct this entire process at the highest possible level in open plenary meetings. The second principle is participation. We will look for formulas that allow all parties to be heard and that take their concerns into account to the extent possible. And, of course, the requisite intensity is the final principle needed to fulfil our mandate in the shortest possible time frame, so that the report can be properly prepared for submission to the General Assembly.

As you know, an unedited version of the draft report to the General Assembly has been distributed informally. The report will be available tomorrow, Wednesday, 24 August, in all languages under the symbol CD/WP.567; all member and observer States will find it in their pigeonholes on the first floor of this building. Also, as the regional coordinators were told yesterday, I intend to start the negotiations on the report next Tuesday, 30 August at 10 a.m. in a formal plenary meeting.

I have no doubt, and I of course make the commitment, that during our presidency we will hold as many additional meetings and informal consultations as may be necessary to move forward as far as possible on the aspects of the work of the Conference that are still pending, and, as our Deputy Minister said, our primary pending issue is of course the programme of work. We also wish to point out that the proposal made by Colombia is still under informal consideration, and that if there is any chance of moving it forward Cuba will continue to work on the proposal. We remain open to different options, and we would like to express our willingness and availability to meet at any time with any delegation that wishes to share with the presidency its particular concerns or interests during this period. As we said in informal P6 meetings and meetings with the regional groups, we stand ready, at any time, to start analysing the substantive work or any other type of negotiating work in this body. We are even willing to convene an extraordinary session of the Conference on Disarmament, if advisable and acceptable for all States. If the Conference on Disarmament is not functioning, it will not be because of Cuba. We will of course always be willing to listen and act responsibly and objectively in order to move forward, in keeping with the prevailing circumstances.

Now that it is clear how we will conduct our work, I am going to start the list of speakers. I give the floor first to the Ambassador of Japan. You have the floor.

Mr. Suda (Japan): Mr. President, first of all let me congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I assure you of the fullest support and cooperation of my delegation for your presidency. I would also like to express our appreciation for the presence of Mr. Moreno Fernández, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and for his presentation at the outset of the Cuban presidency. I would further like to extend our welcome to participants in the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme attending the Conference today.

Japan and Australia held the Experts Side Event on FMCT Verification from 30 May to 1 June of this year, before the summer holiday. As chair of that side event, I am now preparing a chair's written report and will formally submit it to the Conference very shortly. Like the report of the earlier Australia-Japan Experts Side Event on FMCT Definitions, contained in documents CD/1906 and CD/1909, this report will represent the chair's personal summary of the event. Although you will have the detailed written report soon, today I would like to make a brief presentation focusing on some of the salient points of the forthcoming written report.

The side event did not represent a negotiation or a pre-negotiation, but an opportunity to exchange views. During this side event, no agreements were sought and no decisions were taken. Views expressed during this side event were without prejudice to the national negotiating positions that participants will have when negotiations in the Conference on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) begin.

For the third side event, which I chaired, I was assisted by Mr. Bruno Pellaud as a discussion facilitator. The event covered four themes: a recap of the previous two side event meetings; verification of "fissile material" and "production facilities"; other verification-related matters; and wrap-up. The numerous experts who participated made valuable contributions to this meeting.

The first theme provided the opportunity for participants to recap previous discussions, in particular on the relationship between the question of definitions and the purpose of verification under an FMCT. It seemed that there was a general view at least among those who expressed opinions on this issue that a relationship between various definitions and verification certainly exists, while some were of the opinion that the two may not necessarily have to be identical.

The second theme was divided into two subtopics: verification of fissile material and verification of production facilities. Our discussions on both subtopics took a similar approach. First, existing verification measures were briefly reviewed. It was then asked whether the existing measures could be applied to the verification of an FMCT and, if so, how this could be achieved. It was also asked whether any specific additional factors could be considered for verifying fissile materials and production facilities and an FMCT and, if so, what these factors might be, and what kind of verification measures should be employed.

The existing verification concepts such as inspection goals, detection time and the quantity component, as well as existing verification methods such as nuclear material accountancy, containment and surveillance, environmental sampling and design information verification, were discussed. There were mixed views as to the applicability of existing concepts and methods to the verification of an FMCT.

Discussions went on to possible verification methods and difficulties in verifying pre-FMCT facilities, as well as enrichment and reprocessing facilities. The importance of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) experience in these fields was noted. Detection of undeclared facilities and activities was also a focus of discussion. The utility of the additional protocol was debated in this regard. Possible coordination with other international organizations such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization was said to be relevant.

With regard to possible challenge inspections, a number of difficult issues were pointed out, while the relevance of the experience of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was mentioned. Managed access under the CWC and the NPT was said also to be relevant in protecting sensitive information.

As chair of the side event, I do not intend to draw any conclusions in my report as to what verification measures and methods the participants supported and did not support as being applicable in FMCT verification. But I would like to point out that there was a widely shared view among participants, firstly, that negotiators should first look at the current IAEA safeguards measures and then see which ones could be applicable to an FMCT and, secondly, that there are already a number of effective, readily applicable verification measures and methods and other measures that could be applicable with the necessary adjustments.

The third theme, other verification-related matters, centred around the possible legal structure of an FMCT and organizational issues. One option raised was to have a central instrument that described the key obligations and central verification principles and approaches, with detailed modalities and guidelines in a separate agreement between a State party and the verification organization. Another option raised was to have a more extensive treaty which addressed central verification issues, including definitions, the verification approach at enrichment and reprocessing facilities, and a verification model protocol.

Under the fourth theme, wrap-up, the chair presented a non-paper, which is annexed to the report, listing a number of major questions addressed during this side event. This non-paper was not intended to be exhaustive but just to serve as reference material.

The discussions on FMCT verification during this event were very rich and interesting. The discussions showed that there was strong interest among participants in FMCT issues and a willingness to engage in detail on a variety of views and options for such a treaty. The discussions were also very informative. It is my hope that this event will encourage further reflection on different possible options for FMCT verification, which could be a reference point for future negotiations.

I thank the Conference member and observer States which participated in this event. I particularly thank the experts who travelled to Geneva, in some cases from quite distant capitals. I also particularly thank Mr. Eric Pujol, an IAEA expert, for his presence and his very informative and insightful views on verification. I am grateful to IAEA for facilitating his participation.

I would also like to express my appreciation for Dr. Bruno Pellaud's expert assistance and generous cooperation. Without his cooperation, we could not have held that fruitful discussion. I express my gratitude to Switzerland, and in particular Ambassador Lauber, for facilitating Dr. Pellaud's participation.

Finally, I wish to thank Australia and the staff of its Conference delegation, and in particular Ambassador Woolcott, for co-hosting this event.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement, and especially for the information he provided about the parallel event on fissile material that Japan held jointly with Australia.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, who also served as President of the Conference this year. Mr. Wang, you have the floor.

Mr. Wang Qun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, the Chinese delegation would like to congratulate you as you take your turn in assuming the presidency of the Conference. We are delighted to see that the friendly country of Cuba, an important member of the Non-Aligned Movement, is presiding over the Conference. We are confident that, Ambassador Reyes Rodríguez with his outstanding leadership skills and extensive diplomatic experience will undoubtedly be able to carry forward the work of the Conference and make concrete progress. China agrees to provide its full support and to cooperate with the President from Cuba in his work, as he continues work towards breaking the deadlock in the Conference as soon as possible. We take this opportunity to welcome the distinguished Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Moreno Fernández, and to express our appreciation for his visit to the Conference and for the important statement he has made. The Deputy Minister's visit is a testament to his and his Government's political support for and firm belief in the work of the Conference, and it will undoubtedly breathe new life into it. China will work together with all the parties concerned and continue to actively support the early adoption of a programme of work and the start of substantive work in all areas addressed by the Conference, including negotiations on an FMCT, through open and transparent intergovernmental consultations, in accordance with the rules of procedure. At the same time, China will constructively participate in the consultations on the report of the Conference's work this year.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. El-Atawy (Egypt): Ambassador Badr would have liked to be here to welcome your presidency and to welcome Mr. Moreno Fernández. As you are very well aware, there is a special session today in the Human Rights Council and Ambassador Badr is chairing the Arab Group there. So he sends his apologies and asked me to read the following statement:

"Mr. President, at the outset, let me congratulate you on assuming the presidency at this crucial juncture. We trust your leadership not only to wrap up the 2011 session but to assist the first incoming president of the 2012 session to conduct consultations that will allow the 2012 session to successfully adopt a balanced and comprehensive programme of work at the first possible opportunity. Of course, we expect that such a programme of work would give due priority to nuclear disarmament.

Like Cuba, on whose position we have been enlightened through the wise remarks of Mr. Moreno Fernández, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Egypt considers the top priority of the work of the Conference to be measures leading to nuclear disarmament. In doing so, Egypt takes its lead from the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, which considered 'effective measures of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war [to] have the highest priority'.

Egypt currently has the honour to preside over the Non-Aligned Movement. This movement has always been in the forefront of the international disarmament effort. It also clearly considers nuclear disarmament a top priority. At their Sharm el Sheikh summit, the Heads of State and Government of the Movement emphasized the necessity to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame, including a nuclear weapons convention.

This convention is envisaged to eliminate all nuclear weapons, to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction. Such an approach will not only provide us with a road map to our destination — that is, nuclear disarmament — but also to deal effectively with fissile materials and negative security assurances, both of which are of great concern to the Conference.

The same position was reiterated lately at the Sixteenth Ministerial Conference and Commemorative Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in May 2011, in Bali, Indonesia, where ministers reaffirmed the Movement's principled positions on nuclear disarmament, which remains its highest priority, and on the related issue of nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects, and stressed that efforts aiming at nuclear non-proliferation should be parallel to simultaneous efforts aiming at nuclear disarmament. They stressed their concern at the threat to humanity posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use. They reiterated 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 in accordance with their relevant multilateral legal obligations. They underscored the need for the nuclear-weapon States to implement the unequivocal undertaking they made in 2000 and reiterated in 2010 to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons and emphasized, in this regard, the urgent need to commence negotiations on comprehensive and complete nuclear disarmament without delay.

The demand for negotiations to reach nuclear disarmament is not a controversial or unreasonable one. Indeed, such a demand stems from the commitment of nuclear-weapon States to disarm their nuclear weapons in accordance with article VI of the NPT – and may I remind everyone here that such a commitment is the basis of the NPT regime itself.

Negotiations to achieve nuclear disarmament also take their cue from the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, according to which 'the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law'. This was emphasized again at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, where the Conference expressed its 'deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons' and reaffirmed 'the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law'.

Egypt also belongs to the New Agenda Coalition, which is striving to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons and has contributed both to the 13 steps, in 2000, and the 2010 action plan, including the all-important action 5. May I remind you that both were accepted by all States parties to the NPT, including all five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Equally agreed to was action 6, wherein — and I quote — ‘all States agree that the Conference on Disarmament should immediately establish a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament, within the context of an agreed, comprehensive and balanced programme of work’. We are waiting for the Conference to heed this call.

Let me conclude with one of the mantras of the non-aligned countries, which is that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. This is indeed our objective.

However, I cannot conclude without expressing our concern that more than a year has passed since the adoption of the action plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, with little to show in terms of the implementation of the action plan.

This is particularly apparent in the case of the Middle East, where no preparations have taken place for the holding of a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, to be attended by all States of the region.

We call on the Secretary-General of the United Nations and on the depositary States to immediately undertake all the necessary preparations in consultation with the States of the region.”

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate of Egypt for his statement and send our greetings to his country’s ambassador, who is defending the Arab League and also representing the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement in the meetings of the Human Rights Council. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Ecuador. Mr. Montalvo, you have the floor.

Mr. Montalvo (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, we would like to congratulate the delegation of Cuba on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, especially at this particular juncture when the forum is facing difficult challenges that we are sure the Cuban mission, under your leadership, Mr. President, will know how to address with its characteristic openness, responsibility and professionalism. And we welcome in particular, of course, the presence here this morning of Deputy Minister Abelardo Moreno Fernández, a dear and old friend, but above all a great and experienced diplomat who knows and has mastered the labyrinth of multilateral diplomacy as few people in the world can, and who will certainly know how to make an important contribution at this complex moment in the history of the Conference on Disarmament. The statement he gave a few moments ago is an eloquent example of such a contribution, with his direct and clear description of the situation facing this Conference and the problems besetting it, which go beyond procedural issues and involve political and ideological positions that are not confined within the austere walls of this historic meeting room. The Deputy Minister gave evidence of this by referring to the setbacks also experienced in other bodies, such as the United Nations Disarmament Commission, or the failure to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, without forgetting of course, as some would like to do, that the essential principle is that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral forum for taking decisions on disarmament, and that its primary mandate is precisely nuclear disarmament.

As the Deputy Minister mentioned, several initiatives have been taken to jump-start this old machinery, including last year’s high-level meeting, and which we witnessed with high expectations, and we now share his concern about attempts to ignore or minimize the

importance of this forum, which should instead be supported and strengthened. We also agree that any solution or end to this long and unacceptable deadlock and stagnation in the Conference should be achieved in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and its fundamental principles, which include nuclear disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security. In recent years we have heard many explanations, analyses and even harsh self-criticisms, and a proliferation of possible solutions, and after all that we still come away empty-handed, perhaps looking up at the ceiling of this meeting room, having failed to adopt the famous and much exalted programme of work, and in the complete and — if I might add — irresponsible absence of serious, sincere, effective and productive negotiations in the field of disarmament. We believe that, in addition to reproaching us for our failure to fulfil our mandate, this experience should at least serve as a reminder not to fall into the same mistakes and the same pathetic attitudes in the future, so that one day we might be able to bolster this old structure so it can actually serve the noble purpose for which it was established, namely the total elimination of nuclear weapons. As long as such weapons continue to exist, this forum cannot relax or sit idly by.

As we have said many times before, we must indeed observe procedures as we move forward, but we must not make the mistake of becoming slaves to those procedures. Rules must go hand in hand with principles. They must adapt to new realities and must never ignore the fact that their ultimate goal is to preserve and maintain peace in all its forms. The essential objective of this Conference is to create a world without nuclear weapons, without the shadow or threat of devastating wars, and we will repeat as many times as necessary that the mere existence of nuclear weapons — let alone in the amounts Deputy Minister Moreno Fernández quoted this morning — poses too great a risk to humanity for us to allow it to continue. The vast resources that are used for, or rather wasted on, developing nuclear weapons could instead be used to alleviate hunger, combat poverty and promote well-being throughout the world. In short, in the words of Mr. Moreno Fernández they could be used to promote life rather than death. The mere possession of these weapons should not be a source of pride, but rather of shame, and the Conference should certainly act to make this crude reality less shameful, if for no other reason than to avoid embarrassment. Mr. President, my delegation is at your disposal to work towards this end, and we will support all your initiatives — including that of taking up again the proposal of Colombia regarding a working group — that are aimed at bolstering the institutional structure of this forum, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and especially during this crucial period between now and the end of the year when the issue of this forum's existence could be settled once and for all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you for your statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of the Philippines.

Ms. Dela Cruz (Philippines): Mr. President, the Philippine delegation wishes to join other delegations in conveying our congratulations to the distinguished Ambassador of Cuba for assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and our gratitude to the esteemed Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his valuable stewardship of the Conference.

The Philippines also welcomes the presence of Mr. Moreno Fernández, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and of the members of the Disarmament Fellowship Programme.

The Philippine delegation would like to take this opportunity to draw attention to the forthcoming Seventh Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the regional and national preparations being made accordingly.

The Philippines recently co-organized a BWC conference week in Makati City from 28 June to 1 July 2011. It consisted of workshops on BWC national implementation and

confidence-building measures; building capacity for prevention, preparedness and response; and issues for the Seventh Review Conference.

The conference was co-organized by the Philippine Government, the BWC Implementation Support Unit of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the European Union, and the Governments of Australia and the United States.

The participants included delegations representing the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and regional partners including Australia, China, the European Union, Japan, Norway, the Republic of Korea and the United States; the United Nations and other international organizations; and academic institutions, including the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre.

The conference week was an invaluable opportunity to exchange initial ideas for the upcoming Seventh Review Conference and for cooperation not only among the various States parties and intergovernmental institutions but also among the diplomatic, security and scientific communities within each country.

We wish to thank our co-organizers and the participants for the success of the workshop. The Philippine delegation will be sharing further details on the conference in various BWC-related events in the coming weeks.

Our delegation would also be interested in hearing from other regions and nations about their preparations for the Review Conference.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the Philippines for the information it has just provided. I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ambassador Germán Mundaraín Hernández. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Mundaraín Hernández (The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to greet and welcome the presence of the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Abelardo Moreno Fernández, who has joined forces with other dignitaries who have recently visited this forum to bring some political momentum to the Conference. We value his guiding words as a contribution that will enrich the Conference, and we appreciate his extensive experience. Welcome, Deputy Minister. We welcome the presence of Mr. Tokayev, Secretary-General of the Conference, and we also welcome the presence in this meeting room of the participants in the fellowship programme.

Ambassador Reyes Rodríguez, we congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference and we are pleased to see you leading our work during what is a crucial time for this forum. We are confident that under your leadership and proven diplomatic experience we will be able to end this session of the Conference on a good note. You have my delegation's full support and cooperation in the work you plan to carry out during the next few weeks. We trust and agree with your statement that you will give priority to the principle of transparency when leading this Conference.

We believe that efforts are being made to make up for lost time and to ensure that the Conference meets people's expectations. We know that these are times of great political complexity, but we also know that multilateral forums are, by their very nature, the places in which to work towards peace and international security. Our commitment to peace, disarmament, development and the human rights of our peoples requires that we show unwavering political will, based on constructive, transparent and participatory dialogue that takes all views into account. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela gives priority to the adoption of new instruments on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to the strengthening of existing instruments; also, we have traditionally supported general and complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international monitoring. Until the goal of nuclear disarmament has been reached, negative

security assurances must be provided against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. We have yet to reach a consensus on the most appropriate way of providing such guarantees. We need to start negotiations on a legally binding instrument that bans the production of fissile material for explosive purposes, contains specific provisions on verification and covers existing stockpiles of fissile material. My Government is also concerned about the possibility of weaponizing outer space, given the negative effects this would have on international peace and security. Outer space must be reserved for peaceful activities that benefit humanity.

Now is the time when it becomes necessary for all of us to honour our commitments and our responsibility towards the international community, and for this impressive meeting room, the Council Chamber of the Palais des Nations, to once again become the stage for substantive negotiations resulting in the adoption of important, legally binding multilateral instruments in the field of disarmament.

Mr. President, you have the important responsibility of submitting the report on the Conference's work this year, and thereby the difficult task of explaining the current situation in this forum to the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, because despite all the efforts made once again this year to lift the Conference on Disarmament out of stagnation, we did not manage to achieve this. It is worth noting the work of your predecessors who held the presidency in 2011, namely the representatives of Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Aware of the difficulties facing them, they still made invaluable efforts to promote the start of substantive work in this forum. We wish to express our gratitude to these former presidents.

Lastly, I appreciate the fact that the presidency is currently held by a sister country from Latin America and that other sister countries preceded it, such as Colombia and Chile, who also tried to help to end the deadlock in this Conference.

I will now conclude. We would like to reaffirm the commitment of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to disarmament, and to nuclear disarmament in particular.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka, Mr. Jauhar.

Mr. Jauhar (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, at the outset we would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Our delegation is pleased to see Cuba, a fellow member of the Group of 21, presiding over this forum. We witnessed your leadership in the meetings of the Human Rights Council, the Group of 77 and China, and other forums where you have provided not only leadership to your delegation but a voice for the developing world. We are confident that you will discharge your responsibilities in this august body with the same professionalism and dedication. We assure you of our fullest support and cooperation in advancing the work at hand.

My delegation, through you, Mr. President, expresses its sincere appreciation to Mr. Moreno Fernández, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, for his statement, which highlighted issues that are both pertinent and timely.

My delegation takes this opportunity to commend Ambassador So Se Pyong and the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for their positive contribution to the Conference on Disarmament during the presidency of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We recognize the efforts to revitalize the work of the Conference.

Sri Lanka wishes to associate itself with the statements delivered by Pakistan on behalf of the G21 on 11 and 13 August and to reiterate the importance we attach to the Conference on Disarmament, which is the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

We recognize the urgent need to commence negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time frame, including negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention. We need to continue in earnest our efforts to achieve this goal. We have consistently observed that consensus is indispensable to the attainment and maintenance of international security.

It is also manifest in our rules of procedure that the aim is to reach our common objective of witnessing a safer world free of nuclear weapons. It is imperative to engage all member States in an equitable manner, recognizing their security concerns.

Sri Lanka continues to be concerned at the existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use, as they pose a threat to humanity, and therefore joins the collective call for the elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals. Pending this achievement, we are of the view that there is an urgent need to reach an early engagement on a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

We encourage nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger by de-alerting nuclear weapons and diminishing the operational readiness of weapon systems. We stand ready to work within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament towards achieving this objective, as it is our joint commitment and responsibility to our peoples.

Mr. President, my delegation looks forward to working with you on the adoption of the 2011 report of the Conference and towards the advancement of our common objectives.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegate of Sri Lanka for his statement. I will now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but before I do so I would like to reiterate my country's deep appreciation of our friend for his excellent performance as President, and in particular for allowing Cuba to swap places with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the rotation of the presidency. Once again, many thanks on behalf of Cuba for your work. I give you the floor, Ambassador.

Mr. So Se Pyong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Let me first express my highest appreciation to the President for his kind remarks concerning my presidency, and I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to those delegations which also made kind remarks concerning the presidency of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. President, let me warmly welcome and congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I am confident that your able leadership will lead our work to a fruitful result.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea associates itself with the statement delivered on 18 August by the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 21. My delegation also highly commends Mr. Moreno Fernández, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, for his address at today's plenary meeting. We are greatly encouraged by his statement, in which he addressed the importance of nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea takes this opportunity to reiterate its firm resolution in this regard. It is ready to endorse any comprehensive and balanced argument which satisfies and meets the concerns of all member States.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan and outgoing coordinator of the Group of 21. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I would like to first welcome the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Moreno Fernández, to the Conference on Disarmament. Before I comment on his statement, let me also take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Conference. It is a great pleasure for me personally, as you are a close friend, to see you as the President, but it is also a great pleasure for my delegation to see Cuba chairing the Conference.

Cuba is a country that is greatly admired by the Pakistani people. We view Cuba as a leading member of the Non-Aligned Movement and as a country that symbolizes the courage and determination that are so desired and needed by developing countries to pursue their independent paths to progress and development despite opposition by powerful international forces.

We in Pakistan greatly admire Cuba also for the support that was given to us at our time of need during the earthquake of 2005 in northern Pakistan, when more than a thousand Cuban doctors came to Pakistan to help our people recover from this devastation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the outgoing President, for the tremendously transparent and effective manner in which he conducted his presidency. We value the manner in which he maintained and opened transparent and consistent dialogue with all member States in the Conference.

I would now like to briefly comment on the statement made by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. We fully appreciate and concur with his statement, especially the emphasis and the priority that he has given to the issue of nuclear disarmament, in keeping with the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement in the United Nations and the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament. We also agree with him that the impasse that we are facing today in the realm of disarmament is prevalent not only in the Conference but also in the United Nations Disarmament Commission as well as the First Committee of the General Assembly.

We need to be able to address this stalemate and this impasse in the entire United Nations disarmament machinery. We also appreciate the fact that he has underscored that this impasse is not due to any fault or shortcomings in the rules of procedure of the Conference but to the lack of political will, and in particular the need to address the security concerns of States in order to make progress in the realm of disarmament. This is not a new concept: it was accepted way back in 1978, in paragraph 29 of the outcome document of the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, and I will quote from that paragraph: "The adoption of disarmament measures should take place in such an equitable and balanced manner as to ensure the right of each State to security and to ensure that no individual State or group of States may obtain advantages over others at any stage."

We believe that, despite the emphasis that was placed on nuclear disarmament by the first special session on disarmament, which created the Conference on Disarmament itself with the express mandate of negotiating a treaty on nuclear disarmament, and despite the passage of three decades, this body has made no progress in the context of nuclear disarmament. In fact, it would seem that the objective of a comprehensive treaty on nuclear disarmament has been shelved and totally forgotten by certain countries.

And this has happened, most surprisingly, despite the end of the cold war, because during the cold war one could have argued that the two major nuclear-weapon States needed weapons of mutual assured destruction to defend themselves against each other. But now that the cold war has ended, we see no logic, no justification for these nuclear weapons to remain central to the strategic postures of different nuclear-weapon States, of the major nuclear-weapon States.

Despite the fact that Pakistan is a nuclear-weapon State — and, I may add, a reluctant nuclear-weapon State because we have been forced into this position — even so, we are ready to fulfil our commitment to nuclear disarmament, and we remain ready to engage in the Conference and outside the Conference, or wherever it is considered appropriate, to negotiate a comprehensive treaty on nuclear disarmament.

We also feel that the next logical step for the Conference — as I have said on many occasions before, keeping in view the security interests of all States — is to negotiate a treaty on negative security assurances, because I cannot think of any nuclear-weapon State today that is in a position to use nuclear weapons against States that do not possess nuclear weapons.

Therefore, it is eminently reasonable to argue that we should, in order to break the impasse that we have faced in this august body, at least start negotiating a treaty on negative security assurances.

Mr. President, I would again like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency and again thank the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba for his very valuable statement.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you for your statement, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the delegate of Indonesia.

Ms. Djajaprawira (Indonesia): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation is confident that with your wealth of experience and able leadership the Conference will be able to engage in a fruitful discussion on how it could engage in substantive work. Rest assured that my delegation will stand ready to render support and cooperate during your presidency.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Moreno Fernández, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, for his interesting statement at this meeting.

Let me also take this opportunity to reiterate that nuclear disarmament has always been our utmost priority, and that we have always been committed to efforts towards the attainment of a world free from nuclear weapons. Indonesia believes that pursuing nuclear disarmament was always, and should continue to be, the rationale for the establishment of the Conference.

It is regrettable that a stalemate has prevented this body from commencing any negotiations on substantive issues on its agenda. Given the political will, Indonesia is confident that the Conference can advance negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention, negative security assurances and a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons in accordance with the Shannon mandate, as well as the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We have always been supportive of the work of the Conference, and in this regard we would like to reiterate our full support and express our readiness to continue consultations on any proposal aimed at fostering consensus on the programme of work.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Daryaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I am pleased that an active member of the Non-Aligned Movement is presiding over this august body. I assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation.

I would also like to express appreciation for the open and transparent manner in which the distinguished Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea presided over this body. I would like to welcome and express appreciation for the presence of Mr. Moreno Fernández, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, as well as for his valuable statement at the start of the Cuban presidency. I also would like to welcome the presence of the distinguished fellows of this year's United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme.

Allow me to associate myself with the statement of the G21 delivered at the previous meeting by the Ambassador of Pakistan. It is clear that the mandate of the Conference is the negotiation of legally binding instruments in the field of disarmament with due respect for its rules of procedure.

The agenda of the Conference is designed in a manner that helps the start of negotiation of concerted and jointly reinforcing international instruments for nuclear disarmament. Therefore, the Conference is not a single-issue venue, and lack of consensus on the scope of negotiation on one issue cannot prevent delegations from starting negotiation on the others. We believe the early commencement of negotiations, within the Conference, on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame, including a nuclear weapons convention, is the urgent need of the disarmament machinery today.

This convention will prohibit the possession, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons, leading to their ultimate destruction. If we were to start this negotiation in the Conference, we would be in a position to comprehensively tackle all the core issues on the agenda of the Conference in a balanced manner. This will, of course, deal with all aspects of fissile materials in a comprehensive manner and will tackle the legitimate right of non-nuclear-weapon States to security assurances and also prevention of an arms race in outer space. This provides an overall broad structure that coherently preserves the security of all nations by avoiding the current piecemeal, disjointed approach which is cost-free for nuclear-weapon States.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Pending that, a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued, as a matter of priority, through the establishment of an ad hoc negotiation committee in the Conference. Negative security assurances are an issue ripe for negotiation, and the negotiation of this issue would not encompass a technical dimension. The only prerequisite for drafting such an instrument is the political will of nuclear-weapon States.

We support the start of negotiations in the Conference on the conclusion of a legally binding treaty to fully ban the possibility of an attack from space or a war in space and prevent the militarization of space. This legally binding instrument would increase the security of all nations and provide the prerequisites for peaceful uses of space.

On the fissile materials treaty (FMT), we have said with no ambiguity that the issue of stocks and verification should be covered under the possible treaty. The FMT should be a clear and meaningful step towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. Past production and existing stocks as well as the future production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices must be covered under the scope of the treaty. Any negotiation on an FMT which does not include the stocks and all key players would have no content and would consequently be fruitless. Therefore the best place for the negotiation of this treaty is the Conference on Disarmament, and we have to be clear in our programme of work on this important subject.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States of America. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Ms. Kennedy (United States of America): We have listened, with great interest to your speeches today as well as to those of all our colleagues. Certainly there will be real work to be done in this next period, during your presidency, and I can assure you that we will participate actively.

With your indulgence, let me comment now on two items which were raised today. First, I wanted to thank our colleague from the Philippines for the report on the Biological Weapons Convention workshop held in Manila, and indeed for hosting that very, very useful workshop. I think it is just the kind of cross-regional pragmatic exchange of information and ideas seeking consensus that I hope will be emblematic of the review conference which will be held here in Geneva at the end of the year. Indeed, I hope that sort of pragmatic, consensus-seeking open exchange of information and ideas will also be emblematic of our work here in the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me also briefly comment on one of the points raised by our colleague from Egypt. I speak only as the representative of the United States, without having consulted with the other two depositary States, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom. In terms of the conference on a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, I wanted to say that these three States, in conjunction with the Secretary-General, have indeed been working very hard for many months to prepare for this conference, in terms of agreeing on a venue and on a facilitator. This is important work. It obviously needs to be done carefully, in conjunction with the other relevant parties, and it needs to be done discreetly, but please do not mistake the lack of headlines for a lack of effort.

This work has been going on very diligently, and many rounds of consultations and briefings have been offered and held in capitals and in the region. I know the Secretary-General has just this month held a meeting with the United States, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation on their combined efforts and also with other parties.

So this work is ongoing with all the parties, but I would just end with one thought. Ultimately, the success or failure of this Conference and the willingness of the parties to come to the table depends on the States of the region. For our part we certainly hope it does. I forgot one thing. I also wanted, like other speakers, to welcome the United Nations Disarmament Fellows.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much for your statement, Ambassador. I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative and Ambassador of Mexico. Mr. Gómez Camacho, you have the floor.

Mr. Gómez Camacho (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): In fact I only requested the floor so that I could first of all offer a very warm and cordial welcome to the Deputy Minister, Mr. Moreno Fernández, who is also an old and very dear friend of Mexico. So, you are most welcome Mr. Deputy Minister, and I of course also thank you for your statement and for the thoughts you have shared with us, which will undoubtedly enrich a much needed reflection in the Conference on Disarmament. I also asked for the floor to congratulate my very dear friend, Ambassador Reyes Rodríguez, on his assumption of the presidency of this forum. He and everyone else here is well aware of the opinions, considerations and views of Mexico on the situation in the Conference on Disarmament, so I will not repeat them now. I will simply say that it is obvious to me that if anyone has the imagination, wit and ability to breathe new life into the Conference it is my very dear friend Mr. Reyes Rodríguez, so I doubly welcome you and thank you for your leadership as President.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you José Gómez Camacho. I am imaginative, but not that imaginative. The guru classes I am taking have not yet given me that level of knowledge, but thank you anyway. I give the floor to the delegation of Algeria.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Ambassador Idriss Jazaïry would have liked to attend today but is unable to do so for reasons outside his control. He has asked me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption by the delegation of Cuba of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this sensitive time of year when we are required to adopt the annual report of the Conference for submission to the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Algerian delegation has confidence in your competence and ability to manage our work in the best manner and to ultimately attain the desired objective. I assure you that you have the full support of the Algerian delegation and hope that others will extend you the same support. The Algerian delegation would also like to express its sincere appreciation for the tireless efforts of the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and for his excellent management of our work during his presidency of the Conference.

The Algerian delegation welcomes the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. His participation highlights the extent of his country's demonstrated support for and its long-standing commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons, in order to promote world peace, stability and development. The substance of his wise and valuable statement to a great extent reflects the concerns and positions of my country's delegation and, also, the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 21, which attach great importance to the abolition of nuclear weapons and the need to strengthen the multilateral mechanisms, in particular the Conference on Disarmament, that will allow us to attain that goal. The Algerian delegation also shares his assessment that the deadlock that the Conference faces can be attributed to a lack of political will to work towards achieving real nuclear disarmament, rather than to procedural reasons. The deadlock is indeed a matter of concern. We understand the concern of some, who have submitted proposals for alternative formulas and rules for our work that would enable us to start work again; however, we are not convinced that resorting to alternative frameworks outside the Conference or the introduction of new rules of work that are contrary to the rules of procedure of the Conference will enable us to attain the desired objective, namely, the conclusion of properly founded international instruments that have the necessary political legitimacy. We believe that the problem of disarmament and the dangers posed by widespread arsenals highlight, in an emphatic manner, the importance of the role of the Conference on Disarmament and the need to reach consensus, in accordance with the rules of procedure, on a programme of work that would allow us to address the priorities of various States and groups of States parties, in order to establish mutual trust between them. In this context, the Algerian delegation remains convinced that the programme of work adopted in 2009 in document CD/1864 is an excellent starting point from which to launch substantive negotiations and discussions on various items of the agenda that would allow us to establish mutual trust and, finally, arrive at our mandate to negotiate some of the issues before us, in particular, the issue of nuclear disarmament.

Lastly, we would like to thank the Ambassador of the United States of America for the information that she provided concerning her Government's efforts to implement the decisions of the 2010 NPT Review Conference concerning the implementation of the decision adopted during the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East region. We thank her for the information that she provided and hope that, as a result of these efforts, the Conference will be convened in 2012 within the specified time frame. Moreover, we hope that the various depositary States will make concerted efforts to this end.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Following the statement made by Algeria, I now give the floor to Ambassador Pedro Oyarce, a friend and President of the Conference this year who also helped me understand the essence of the problems. I give him the floor and thank him for his constant efforts and his commitment to making progress in this Conference. You have the floor.

Mr. Oyarce (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Very briefly, I would like to express my gratitude to Deputy Minister Abelardo Moreno Fernández for his presence at this meeting, which marks the start of the Cuban presidency. The thoughts he shared echo the concerns about the future of this forum that have often been expressed in this meeting room, in New York and in various bodies and think tanks. It is clear that over the next few months actions must be defined to revitalize the disarmament machinery, and, as the Deputy Minister pointed out, we should probably make a special effort to ensure that this Conference does not lose its relevance through stagnation and a lack of political will. We are at a critical juncture. Our delegation is very pleased to have a multilateralist and specialist in United Nations and disarmament issues as a part of this system, and to have a dear friend presiding over the Conference. Mr. President, we appreciate the explanation of your workplan focusing on the report, and we understand very well what you said in the P6 meetings and in the meeting with the regional groups. It will be difficult to resolve in the report the problems that we were not able to resolve in this meeting room or during other consultations, but I also value highly, from a political perspective, your willingness to continue looking for ways to overcome this difficult situation. You mentioned recent efforts, such as those made by Colombia during its presidency. I believe the Colombian proposal includes elements that we could discuss now or later during the complex debate we will have in the General Assembly. We are facing a difficult situation; we need to be realistic but we also need political will. Mr. President, you can count on our full cooperation, solidarity and deep friendship.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I am counting on you, colleague, friend and member of the P6. I am also counting on the man seated next to you, Ambassador Wang, along with the rest of the P6 and all the ambassadors and delegates in this Conference. Our task is truly complex, but we will succeed through collective efforts, and I am counting on all of you to push things forward. Anything that can be added to the report that might somehow help to revitalize the Conference in the short, medium or long term will undoubtedly receive all the attention it deserves. Thank you very much for your statement.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe. You have the floor.

Mr. Manzou (Zimbabwe): Since it has been a while since I spoke in this forum, I would like to start by congratulating Mr. Tokayev on his appointment to the posts of Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva. My delegation looks forward to his wise leadership in moving the disarmament machinery forward. I would also like to extend my delegation's congratulations to you on your assumption of the office of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish you great success in your work.

My sincere appreciation also goes to your predecessors for the 2011 session, the ambassadors of Canada, Chile, China, Colombia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Let me also take this opportunity to welcome among us the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Moreno Fernández, and to thank him for his very eloquent statement to the Conference. The pertinent issues raised in his statement are particularly relevant in this complex world in which we live. Zimbabwe fully shares most of the positions that Mr. Moreno Fernández has outlined and would like to endorse the list of issues raised for the consideration of this particular body. My delegation also supports the statements made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 21.

We are in the last segment of the 2011 session, and my delegation looks forward to the invaluable and apt leadership that Cuba will provide in the consideration of the adoption of the 2011 annual report of the Conference on Disarmament to the United Nations General Assembly. In all this, you can be assured of my delegation's full support.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you for your statement, I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative and Ambassador of Bangladesh. He had just arrived in Geneva when he had to assume the presidency of this Conference, and he did so with great dignity and success. I give him the floor also, and I am counting on his support in the performance of my duties. You have the floor.

Mr. Hannan (Bangladesh): Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. We look forward to a productive and fruitful session under your able leadership. You can count on my delegation's fullest support and cooperation in discharging your responsibilities.

Bangladesh appreciates the statement made by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba today. Bangladesh also deeply appreciates the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as the previous president of the Conference.

We have almost come to the end of this session. We are disappointed that we could not make any substantive progress in the work of the Conference in 2011.

The existing deadlock in the Conference is a political problem linked with the current regional and global security environment. Therefore, engagement at the highest political level should be strengthened. Merely technical discussions without the necessary political commitment would not lead to solutions.

Bangladesh is a staunch supporter of a multilateral approach to disarmament and non-proliferation. We subscribe to the view that the Conference is the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body. We attach high priority to nuclear disarmament and negative security assurances besides a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Bangladesh is ready to do its part for the revitalization of the Conference.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Ambassador and representative of the United Kingdom. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Ms. Adamson (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, I want to warmly welcome you to the presidency.

Thank you also to the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba for being with us today. It is always good for us to have external challenges in this chamber, so I thank him very much for spending time with us.

Mr. President, we are looking forward to working diligently with you on the report. We will remain ready to undertake any kind of informal brainstorming as suggested previously by the President from Colombia, whether that means sitting down with a cup of coffee — an imaginary cup of coffee if you are observing Ramadan — or some other format — we are ready. We do think we need to roll up our sleeves and be willing to talk in a slightly more informal way.

I also wanted to pick up on the issue of the Middle East zone, as this was raised by Egypt, the United States and then Algeria. Our Algerian colleague should be happy that I do not know the word for musketeer in Arabic, because I would have referred to us as the "three musketeers" in Arabic.

The United Kingdom, the United States and the Russian Federation have been working very closely on this for the last few months, but, as the representative of the United

States said, we have been working quietly. You will not hear any megaphone diplomacy from us on this because it is a very serious issue which takes a lot of sensitive handling.

I think that if we look back to how the original decision was put together last year and pay tribute to how Alison Kelly of Ireland went about her work, we see that it was very much a behind-the-scenes effort. I am committed to playing my own part in this. It is a subject dear to my own heart, but I think that, as the representative of the United States said, there have been plenty of things happening in different parts of the world, including in New York with the Secretary-General, which I warmly welcome.

We are ready to carry on playing our part. We are going to need partners who are ready to engage with us in that same quiet, careful, sensitive spirit.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you for your statement, Ambassador. If there is no one else, I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation. You have the floor.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I would like to associate myself with the words of welcome already extended to you and to the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Abelardo Moreno Fernández. We are pleased to see him in this room. It is, of course, a particular pleasure for my country, which has long experience of very friendly relations with Cuba, and we hope that it will help us to ensure the progress of the Conference on Disarmament together.

My delegation has already had several opportunities to state its position on how to ensure the progress of our Conference and on the priorities we see. I will not repeat them again but will simply say that we fully share the views expressed in the statement by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba regarding the fact that the Conference's problems are not procedural but are the result of a lack of political will among States.

Since the question of the Middle East has been raised here, and that my colleagues from the three depositary States have explained their position, I also wish to refer to it, so we understand that we are all, essentially, talking about the same thing. In this connection, I simply wish to draw attention to the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. For ease I will read in English – this is chapter IV, paragraph 7:

(continued in English)

- (i) “The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, will convene 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, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region ...”

(continued in Russian)

This quote from the decision that we all adopted recently shows that, indeed, the depositaries bear responsibility and we will play our part. Ambassador Jo Adamson pointed out that we will undertake this work without necessarily announcing each step of the process. It is important, however, that the implementation of this decision should involve all countries engaged in the process, and first and foremost, all countries in the region. Accordingly, we are counting on the fact that the proposals we are drawing up concerning the times and venues for these meetings, and also the coordinator of this process, must be accepted by all countries concerned, and not only the depositaries.

In concluding my statement I would like to welcome the representatives of the United Nations Disarmament Programme. It gives me particular pleasure to note that 20

years ago I sat in that very place myself and I hope that they also have brilliant careers in the field of disarmament ahead of them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you for your statement. Does any other delegation wish to participate? It appears not.

Mr. El-Atawy (Egypt): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Since the honourable delegate from the United Kingdom has asked questions, I could not let this session end without telling her that the word for musketeers in Arabic is “*fursan*”. Regarding the explanation given by the three depositary States, we welcome the interest they have shown in giving us an explanation of the efforts they are making behind the scenes.

We are very much looking forward to seeing these great efforts materialize in the steps included in the action plan, and to seeing the Secretary-General of the United Nations, with the three depositary States, in consultation with all States of the region, finally appoint a facilitator and choose a host country so we can get going and make all the preparations needed for convening the conference in time in 2012.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much for this clarification, and I hope that the negotiation of the report does not end in us all becoming musketeers and fighting each other with swords. In any case, I sincerely thank you for all your positive comments about the Cuban presidency that is just starting, and in particular for all the appreciation shown for the presence of our Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Abelardo Moreno Fernández. I need to make a correction regarding scheduling. The plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be convened on 30 August, but at 3 p.m. I beg your pardon; I give the floor to Algeria.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, the delegation of Algeria is taking the floor just to ask you and the other members of the Conference for your indulgence regarding the scheduling of the next plenary meeting on 30 August.

We ask you to take into consideration the fact that Eid al-Fitr will be celebrated by Muslims and the Muslim community on either 30 or 31 August, as the date has not yet been set. We would very much appreciate it if this was taken into account when scheduling the meeting of 30 August.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Of course we are willing to accommodate, and to be honest, I have so many friends in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that if I did not do so I would be hung out to dry in the worst way. I would like to ask the secretary if there is any reason we cannot convene the next meeting on 1 September. That is no problem. So then, would 10 a.m. be acceptable? We will meet on 1 September at 10 a.m. I just want to say that I think from now on the meetings should focus on action and direct negotiations, unless someone comes up with an idea that can lead us out of this situation. I plan to avoid substantive discussions when there are no clear objectives, and we will move directly to negotiating the report. If during this period we suddenly have a storm of ideas, a downpour, a deluge, a flood, and we find a way of agreeing on the proposal made by Colombia or on any other proposal that might enable us to revitalize our work, have no doubt that Cuba will immediately look for a way to move us along this path.

I thank you all for your participation, and I will see you at the next plenary meeting. I declare this meeting closed.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.