

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand six hundred and seventy-seventh plenary meeting

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President: Ms. Camille Petit..... (France)

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The President (*spoke in French*): I declare open the one thousand six hundred and seventy-seventh plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Excellencies, distinguished representatives, thank you for taking part in this morning's meeting. First of all, I would like to inform you that His Excellency Mr. Ambrazevich, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, will now address the Conference. Allow me to suspend the meeting to welcome His Excellency to the podium.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

Mr. Ambrazevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you, Madam President. Ladies and gentlemen, it is to be regretted that, after decades on the agenda of the Conference, the topic of preventing nuclear war is still relevant today, in 2023. We remember how, not long ago, the signing of the international nuclear disarmament treaties – the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) and the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II) – between the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States of America was watched with bated breath in every corner of the globe. Thirty years have passed since the last-named treaty was signed but the world has spiralled back, perhaps for the first time since the early 1960s, to a point from which a real nuclear threat is clearly visible.

Belarus is convinced that a necessary condition for avoiding nuclear war is the creation of an international architecture with a fair system of security guarantees that would take into account the legitimate interests and concerns of all States without exception – small and large, nuclear and non-nuclear. The January 2022 joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States on preventing nuclear war was a step in the right direction.

However, it must be said that this event was rather an exception to the negative trend of the increasing erosion of security in Europe and throughout the world. The stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament over the past 20 years and the near total paralysis of other disarmament forums and treaties are part of this trend. But the main reason for the return of the situation in nuclear disarmament to the original point of confrontation is the long-standing disregard by some countries of the legitimate security interests and concerns of other States.

You would agree with me in wondering how the Belarusian State, the Republic of Belarus, can feel secure when, contrary to the provisions of the Budapest Memorandum on security guarantees for Belarus in connection with the withdrawal of the nuclear weapons of the Soviet Union from its territory, signed by the United States and Great Britain, the latter countries have flagrantly violated the Memorandum and continue to do so to this day.

The United States of America, Great Britain and their North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies from among the members of the European Union have imposed an unprecedented number of economic bans and restrictions on Belarus. They have stopped direct air traffic with our country, halted trade and transit of many goods and made financial transactions difficult or impossible. Neighbouring NATO countries have for several years been setting up military formations on the borders with Belarus, while Poland has been training fighters for the purpose of bringing about a change of power by force of arms in Minsk.

A campaign of harassment has been unleashed against our country in the global television news media. Fake news, such as reports of the use by Belarus of illegal migrants as a weapon against our Western neighbours, is drummed into people's consciousness through the BBC, CNN and Euronews. People are fleeing from the wars and economic devastation created in their countries with the help of all-powerful democracies, fleeing through Belarus to the European Union for a better life. But Lithuanian and Polish border guards push them back to us. What is more, they kill them right on the border and accuse us, Belarus, of not stopping them in their endeavour to get to Germany.

In recent months, however, individual European Union politicians have trumped even these absurd and baseless claims and speculations. Now Belarus is accused of forcibly removing Ukrainian children from territories in the armed conflict zone. An organized voluntary holiday for several hundred children from Donbas in Belarusian Pioneer camps located among forests and lakes, which was fully documented and where the children were provided with multiple meals and medical care and accompanied by adult chaperones,

followed by their solemn return home to Donbas, is presented on prime-time television as the forcible illegal deportation of children from the occupied regions of Ukraine. And all this for one goal – to destroy the union between Belarus and Russia, thereby weakening Moscow and controlling an additional 600 kilometres of territory from west to east between NATO and Russia.

I believe that, after this “picture”, no one in this room has any doubts that Belarus firmly realizes who and what is a threat to its security. I suppose my description was also useful to those who still wonder why Belarus supports Russia.

In the current context of the destruction of the international architecture of global and European security, the Republic of Belarus has long and insistently called for the start of negotiations to define the political and legal foundations of global security. We also support the development of a global, legally binding agreement on the provision of unequivocal and unconditional assurances by nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons.

In this context, I cannot overlook the question of the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, since this issue has repeatedly been the subject of unconscionable insinuations.

Almost 30 years ago, Belarus, guided by a deep sense of responsibility, made a conscious choice to renounce possession of its own nuclear weapons without any conditions or reservations. We joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon State. The contribution of Belarus to nuclear disarmament is clear and incontestable, as has been repeatedly confirmed in numerous documents agreed on a bilateral and multilateral basis.

Taking into account the concerns that I mentioned above and the interests of Belarus in the sphere of national security, Belarus has consistently, in a transparent manner and for all its neighbours and the international community, taken reciprocal actions to develop its own defence potential. These actions are exclusively reactive and are aimed at strengthening our country’s defence capabilities.

As is widely known, the cooperation of Belarus with Russia in the sphere of strengthening defence capabilities and national security is of a strategic, defensive nature and is carried out strictly within the framework of international law. We have the sovereign right to seek help from our closest ally. The deployment of tactical nuclear warheads on the territory of Belarus, if it happens, is exclusively a reaction of necessity to the national security challenges and risks that our country is facing. It is our own choice and our right. These measures are being implemented in strict compliance with the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

I should also note that such cooperation between Belarus and Russia is not something new; it has also been a long-standing practice in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, both in the form of so-called joint nuclear missions and through the deployment of United States nuclear weapons on the territory of five non-nuclear-weapon States that are members of the North Atlantic Alliance in Europe.

In conclusion, allow me to emphasize that Belarus, as a convinced supporter of respectful dialogue on the basis of equal rights in the area of security, is ready for constructive interaction aimed at de-escalating tension, restoring trust and strengthening multilateral mechanisms for non-proliferation and arms control, including in the nuclear sphere.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank His Excellency Mr. Ambrazevich for his statement. Allow me now to suspend the meeting briefly to escort His Excellency back to his seat.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President (*spoke in French*): Excellencies, as announced, today’s meeting of the Conference will feature a discussion based on panel presentations under agenda item 2, entitled “Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters”, with a particular focus on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. I am therefore delighted to welcome five panellists who will be able to

enlighten our Conference with their expertise and make the discussion on this subject as interactive as possible. As you will see, this panel is made up of both researchers and practitioners, as was the case with previous panels. Allow me to introduce our panellists: Emmanuelle Maître, research fellow at the Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (Foundation for Strategic Research); Mélanie Rosselet, director of strategic analysis at the Military Applications Division of the French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) and teacher-researcher at the École Normale Supérieure; Tong Zhao, director of research at the Nuclear Policy Program of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who has kindly agreed to join us remotely and will therefore be able to participate via video link; Piet de Klerk, international expert; and Thomas Fetz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada. For this meeting I intend to proceed as for previous meetings held under our presidency, by first proposing that we listen to the panellists' points of view, and then giving the floor to delegations wishing to ask a question or make a comment on the panellists' presentation. After this interactive question-and-answer session, I will give the floor to the delegations for their national statements. I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to the first panellist, Emmanuelle Maître.

Ms. Maître (Fondation pour la recherche stratégique) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, thank you very much for inviting us to this important discussion. I will start with a brief historical review of the proposed fissile material cut-off treaty, before turning to the prospects for the treaty today and its relevance in the current context. As you know, thirty years ago, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the first resolution calling for the negotiation of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. In March 1995, the Conference on Disarmament considered a mandate presented by Canadian Ambassador Gerald Shannon. The Shannon mandate created a special committee to negotiate a fissile material treaty. However, negotiations quickly stalled, due in particular to disagreement over the priority to be given to this treaty as compared with the more general objective of nuclear disarmament. A special committee was set up at the Conference on Disarmament in 1998 to deal with this issue, but in 1999 the Conference failed to agree on a programme of work. The stalemate was briefly overcome in 2009 but re-emerged in 2010. That said, despite the lack of concrete work, a number of parallel efforts and statements have shown that the vast majority of the international community continued to support the draft treaty.

Firstly, in the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: the action plan adopted by consensus at the 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty made direct reference to the draft treaty, and stated that all States agreed that the Conference on Disarmament should immediately begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, as part of an agreed, comprehensive and balanced programme of work. In 2014 and 2015, there were positive developments, with the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts, made up of representatives of a broadly representative panel of States. This group published a draft treaty and has identified points of consensus as well as possible points of divergence on the treaty's content. Among the elements on which the Group reached consensus was the fact that the treaty must be legally binding, non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable. There was also consensus on the fundamental prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and the Group then also worked on the issue of definitions, and in particular the definition of fissile material as it would be covered by the treaty. In 2017 and 2018, a new group of experts was convened, building on the work already done but following a somewhat different methodology in trying to list the different options that would be possible for the treaty, both in form and substance. In the framework of this working group and in the report subsequently published by the United Nations in 2018, the experts did not really make a recommendation of their own, but rather listed what was possible and above all the implications of the choices that could be made regarding the treaty. That report was the last major development in the project, and obviously the geopolitical context is preventing any progress just now; however, there are also other, more structural, challenges in the way of progress on the treaty.

What precisely are these persistent obstacles and challenges? On the substance, the obstacles are well known, and the main one is obviously the disagreement over whether or

not to include existing stocks in the treaty. The five nuclear-weapon States as defined by the Non-Proliferation Treaty are opposed, but many non-nuclear-weapon States are in favour, and of course Pakistan has made it clear that it would like this addition to the treaty to be negotiated. The question of verification has also been controversial. The Shannon mandate seemed to clearly favour a verifiable treaty but, in 2006, the United States of America proposed a draft without a verification mechanism, pointing out that verification measures could be difficult to monitor. Since then, the United States Administration has reversed this position, but there are still fairly divergent views on the implementation of a verification system and the mandate of any inspectors. Lastly, there are potential disagreements over which materials to ban. Diplomatic efforts to date have focused on weapons-grade highly enriched uranium and on plutonium, but several experts and analysts have pointed to the potential value of establishing some form of control over all highly enriched uranium and other fissile materials, to avoid any risk of diversion. In terms of form, too, there are some notable obstacles and difficulties, first and foremost concerning the procedure. Apart from the general issue of nuclear disarmament, which also covers a treaty banning the production of fissile material, the main items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament are the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances. However, States do not agree on the priority to be given to these different subjects, and the deadlock in the Conference gives rise to questions about the forum in which this treaty should be negotiated, and to a certain frustration that could lead some countries to envisage negotiations outside the framework of the Conference. Of course, this immediately raises the question of State participation since, if we were to consider changing the forum, we would have to ask ourselves how involved all the States of major importance to such a treaty would be in the negotiations, and in particular all the nuclear-weapon States, which would obviously be immediately concerned.

Against this backdrop, and in the face of these obstacles, one might ask whether it is still relevant today to call for and support the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials. In practical terms, according to some experts' estimates, fissile material production is currently limited to India, Pakistan and North Korea, though there is very little information on Israel. The United States, Russia, the United Kingdom and France have all adopted moratoriums on the production of fissile materials for weapons. China has not officially adhered to the moratorium; it had indicated that it had ceased production of these materials, but it has also refused to support the objective of a moratorium on fissile material production, notably at the last Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, held in New York last August, which may have raised some questions. All five nuclear-weapon States are seeking to recycle materials to ensure the continuity of their deterrence strategy. From their point of view, therefore, the effects of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials would be relatively limited. However, they would not be non-existent, insofar as they would formalize the moratoriums adopted and ensure the irreversibility of the commitments made. In addition, they could lead, particularly in the case of the United States and the Russian Federation, to an effective dilution of materials declared to be surplus, so that those materials could no longer be stockpiled for potential use in increasing the size of arsenals. As a result, such a treaty would to some extent act as a cap on the materials available for the manufacture of weapons. Of course, its value in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and security would be even more obvious, and in this sense it would be a useful complement to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In political terms, abandoning the adoption of a fissile material cut-off treaty would be a serious blow to the phased disarmament process. Support for the treaty has been regularly proposed as a logical step in that process, a view supported by a number of States and groups of States. For example, in its recommendations to the last Review Conference, the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative called for an early start to negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material, and considered this to be a priority shared by all States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. That is also the case for participants in the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, which calls on the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and nuclear-weapon States to take the lead in breaking the deadlock in negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. The European Union has also broadly supported this project; the Council adopted a decision in 2017 to improve knowledge and capacity on treaty-related issues in a group of countries, with a

project set up by the Office for Disarmament Affairs. As to the five permanent members of the Security Council, those States, most notably in their joint communiqué of 2021, made following the Paris Conference, have reaffirmed their support for the negotiation of a treaty based on the Shannon mandate. Within the framework of the five nuclear-weapon States, a treaty banning the production of fissile materials was one of the avenues of work identified back in 2014, and this option was again supported at the last major meeting. Furthermore, in 2023, the Group of Seven in particular reaffirmed its support for the treaty, calling for the immediate opening of negotiations. It noted that 2023 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the resolution calling for such a treaty, and urged all countries to give renewed political attention to the treaty's priority objective of preventing a new nuclear arms race. Note that the Group of Seven also calls on all States that have not yet done so to declare and maintain voluntary moratoriums on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Outside the official arena, and particularly in academia and in research think tanks, numerous groups have been working for thirty years on solutions or alternative options, or thinking about what a treaty could be and how it could be implemented in concrete terms. States have also proposed draft treaties, and international organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency have considered verification procedures. In conclusion, a treaty banning the production of fissile material would contribute to the cause of nuclear disarmament by making irreversible the general trend towards reducing nuclear arsenals. It would also formalize the moratorium on fissile material production in certain countries, and limit the volume of material available for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. Lastly, it would complement the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, by limiting the overall quantitative development of weapons, while the Treaty also limits the qualitative development of nuclear weapons to a certain extent. Thank you for your attention.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Madam Maître for her contribution and now give the floor to Mélanie Rosselet.

Ms. Rosselet (Commissariat à l'énergie atomique et aux énergies alternatives (French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission) and the École Normale Supérieure) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Madam Ambassador. I am going to focus on France's efforts because, without waiting for the launch of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials, France has been working on this in concrete and consistent ways for almost thirty years, achieving, in its view, the objectives set out in the treaty, and has therefore, to some extent, shown the way. In my statement, I would like to go beyond the words and look at what these French efforts – both the moratorium and the dismantling of the corresponding fissile material production facilities – have meant in real terms, and then draw some lessons from them with regard to the current context. France is the first and only State to have decided to shut down and dismantle its facilities for the production of fissile material for explosive weapons. It stopped producing fissile materials for its nuclear weapons in 1992 for plutonium and in 1996 for highly enriched uranium. In parallel, France announced a moratorium on the production of these materials on 22 February 1996. France thus acted as a responsible nuclear-weapon State, adopting an approach guided by the principle of strict sufficiency. The aim is to maintain French nuclear forces at the lowest possible level consistent with the strategic context. The cessation of production involved two series of plants. For highly enriched uranium, the plant was located at Pierrelatte, in the Drôme region of the Rhône valley, and used a gaseous diffusion enrichment process. For plutonium, the plants were located at Marcoule, also in the Rhône valley. Plutonium was produced in the G1, G2 and G3 plutonium-producing reactors, then separated in the UPl reprocessing plant. The dismantling programme was launched immediately after the decision to shut down production. Dismantling operations at the Pierrelatte and Marcoule facilities have reached an irreversible stage, as noted on several occasions since 2008 during visits by international experts, representatives, like yourselves, of the Conference on Disarmament, journalists and think tanks. France is the only country to have opened up its former plants to the international community.

This dismantlement represents a considerable effort in terms of financial commitment, and a challenge in terms of implementation and know-how, as I will outline briefly. Depending on the plant concerned, dismantlement requires different techniques and

procedures. At Pierrelatte, the dismantling process took six years to prepare and the work was carried out between 2002 and 2010. To give you an idea, the “lower plant” at Pierrelatte was 900 meters long, and the surface area occupied by the four units was around 12 hectares. The dismantling programme entailed the dismantlement and crushing of 4,000 diffusers, 1,300 tonnes of diffusion barriers and 1,200 kilometres of piping, and produced 20,000 tonnes of waste. At Marcoule, the plutonium clean-up and dismantling work is particularly complex, given the levels and risks of irradiation due to the presence of fission products. Work carried out since 1997 has removed almost 100 per cent of fissile material. In addition, at the UP1 reprocessing plant, since 2013, all the equipment in the workshops where fuel for reprocessing was received, stored and prepared has been dismantled, as well as the fission product extraction lines. The uranium and plutonium separation equipment was dismantled in 2010. The dismantlement of the plant’s high radiological activity section will be completed by 2050. In all, the operations will involve some 1,000 rooms and 30,000 tonnes of waste, most of which can be stored on a surface site, and will require more than 5 million hours of planning and intervention. The Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) is in charge of project management and is responsible for the nuclear facilities. Once operations have been completed, the total cost of dismantling the UP1 plant will amount to around €10 billion, while the total for Pierrelatte will be €1 billion.

What lessons can we draw from this for a treaty banning the production of fissile materials? On the strength of its experience, France calls for the immediate opening of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and for all States concerned to dismantle their production capacities or convert them to civilian use. Why should the cessation of fissile material production be a priority in the area of disarmament? There are several reasons. As Emmanuelle Maître so clearly explained, this is a measure that has been studied for a long time, that is very well documented, and for which a mandate exists, namely the Shannon mandate. Allow me to remind you that France has tabled a draft treaty. In addition, it is a concrete, achievable measure that is in line with a gradual and realistic approach to nuclear disarmament. It is consistent with the objective of disarmament that provides for undiminished security for all, in accordance with article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Thirdly, it is an urgent measure in the current context. The risk we face in the coming years is that of a return to the nuclear arms race and uncontrolled proliferation, and it is clear that the accumulation of materials is a crucial stage in the build-up and quantitative expansion of arsenals. This is an obvious fact and one that is widely acknowledged in this forum.

I would add to these reasons a fear: namely that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons might divert the international community’s attention from more realistic and urgent measures, such as the conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Pending the launch of negotiations, it is essential that the States concerned declare a moratorium on the production of fissile materials for weapons, or confirm previously announced moratoriums. Four of the five nuclear-weapon States have declared a moratorium on the production of fissile material for military purposes; this is not the case for China. Four of the five nuclear-weapon States have no difficulty in reaffirming this moratorium today for themselves and in calling on all concerned States to announce a similar measure. In conclusion, France often hears that exemplarity pays off and that nuclear-weapon States like the United States, France and the United Kingdom should set an example and take further unilateral steps in disarmament, or even consider complete and unconditional unilateral disarmament. It is important for countries like France to be able to see that exemplarity does in fact pay off. It has to be said that this is still not the case for the three measures that France is the only country to have implemented: the complete dismantlement of facilities for the production of fissile material for weapons, the complete dismantlement of the Pacific nuclear test site, and the complete dismantlement of its ground-to-ground nuclear component. Advancing the fissile material cut-off treaty is a collective responsibility, and France will continue to play its full part. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Rossetet for her statement and would now like to give the floor to Tong Zhao, who will be speaking by video link. Sir, you have the floor.

Mr. Zhao (Nuclear Policy Programme, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) *(via video link)*: As an independent researcher, I am happy to provide an Asian perspective on today's discussion.

Geographically, Asia is the only region in the world where fissile materials for weapon purposes are being produced. Open-source research shows that India, Pakistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continue producing fissile materials for weapons. The situations in Israel and China are unclear. Some international observers have raised concerns about China's fast breeder reactors and the civilian reprocessing plants under construction. This concern is driven by the suspicion that China appears to be engaging in significant nuclear force modernization and expansion, based on the large number of new nuclear weapon delivery systems being developed. According to independent international researchers, China's existing military fissile material stockpile does not appear to be enough to sustain such significant nuclear expansion. China might need to resume fissile material production for new warheads to be built. Against this background, China's new breeder reactors in Fujian province are receiving a lot of international attention. One of the reactors is due to come online this year and will use highly enriched uranium, provided by the Russian Federation, as fuel. China denies any connection of its civilian breeder reactors and reprocessing facilities with its weapon programme.

Independent research conducted by international scholars, including those at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, shows that practical and mutually beneficial transparency measures are readily available to be taken by China and others to ensure international confidence that they are not using civilian facilities to produce fissile materials for weapons. Traditionally, China prefers to maintain some opacity over the precise size of its fissile material inventory, believing that the credibility of its nuclear deterrent partially depends on ambiguity surrounding the size of its nuclear arsenal. In theory, such concerns should diminish as China's overall nuclear arsenal grows. It should be in both China's and the international community's interests to promote transparency of the fissile material inventory.

In southern Asia, the so-called nuclear chain has become more salient. Pakistan's nuclear policy is driven by a perceived threat from India; India's nuclear policy is driven by a perceived threat from China; and China's nuclear policy is driven by a perceived threat from the United States of America.

As the relationship between the United States of America and China becomes more competitive, China builds its nuclear capability, which then affects India's nuclear policy and eventually affects Pakistan's nuclear development. India, in particular, is increasingly responding to both China and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities, making it harder for the Indian Government to maintain a nuclear force that is sufficient to deter China while not appearing too threatening to Pakistan. A discussion among these countries to limit their future fissile material production would not threaten their nuclear deterrent in the near term but could be a useful confidence-building measure to mitigate the intensifying security trilemma in southern Asia.

Furthermore, the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. Kim Jong Un, has recently ordered the exponential expansion of his country's nuclear arsenal. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear growth also fuels domestic debate in the Republic of Korea and Japan about indigenous nuclear weapon capabilities. The greatest constraint on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's further nuclear growth is the lack of sufficient fissile materials. To mitigate proliferation risks and to maintain regional stability, countries in East Asia should pursue coordination and cooperation to limit the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's production of more fissile materials.

To reduce the concerns among countries in the region about each other's current or future capabilities regarding the use of civilian facilities to produce fissile materials for weapons, countries like China, Japan and the Republic of Korea could also consider transparency and confidence-building measures among themselves on their current and future civilian reprocessing plans and capacity.

The submarine deal between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (AUKUS) adds another complication; the submarines will use highly enriched uranium as

fuel. Technical issues over AUKUS have been over-politicized to the point that they have become much more difficult to resolve than they need to be. That said, the truth still needs to be sought from the facts, as former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping would have said.

Today, many Chinese experts genuinely believe that Australia could easily unload and divert the highly enriched uranium fuel from the sealed reactors during normal submarine operations. Disagreements over such technical issues can and should be thoroughly debated and examined by international technical experts to minimize politicization of the issue. Public education about the severe public health and environmental risks of the military fissile material production process is important to heighten public attention and scrutiny of national decision-making. Too often, the public is unaware that the process of producing, storing and transporting military fissile materials is not incident free and has had catastrophic consequences for public health and environmental safety. Furthermore, the combined costs of building, maintaining and eventually decommissioning and dismantling military fissile material production facilities are often far greater than expected.

Decisions about producing military fissile materials have direct and significant implications for a country's own population and its neighbours. Public knowledge and input are needed to ensure accountable decision-making in this regard.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Zhao for his contribution and now give the floor to Piet de Klerk. Sir, you have the floor.

Mr. De Klerk (International expert): Thank you, Madam Ambassador. I would like to start by thanking the French presidency for organizing this important and timely debate on preventing nuclear war, and for inviting me to participate. I am speaking in a personal capacity, not on behalf of any capital, or on behalf of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) where I once worked.

Preventing nuclear war is one of the most serious challenges of our times, which brings a heavy responsibility to bear on negotiators here in the Conference on Disarmament. While we have made progress on different fronts, such as reducing the total number of nuclear weapons and reducing the risk of accidents, there are worrying trends and international tensions, particularly related to the current situation in Ukraine. Moreover, the international community has different approaches to reducing nuclear danger. There is frustration that more progress has not been made. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is one expression of that frustration.

Instead of discussing these broader issues, let me talk specifically about the fissile material cut-off treaty, which is one way forward. Putting a stop to the production of highly enriched uranium and plutonium for weapons purposes is a long story, ongoing for over 65 years, which I have been following for 40 years, on and off. The story has thus far not had a happy ending. I still consider it one of the best ways forward, to the benefit of all. The concept is primarily an American brainchild from the Eisenhower presidency, which first arose in a speech by President Eisenhower in 1953 speech and the negotiating proposal in 1957, which was discussed in London. That proposal was rejected by the Soviet Union, which at the time was still building up its facilities for the production of fissile materials. Such is the fate of many freeze proposals: often one party considers itself at a disadvantage in a presumed race.

By the early 1990s, when President Clinton dusted the topic off, the situation had improved; the Russian Federation had, like the United States, concluded that it had more than sufficient fissile material for weapons purposes. All five nuclear-weapon States declared themselves in favour of a production moratorium, four of the five declaring so formally in the United Nations Security Council.

In 1994, my United States colleague Lewis Dunn, with whom I worked until recently in the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, wrote an article entitled "A fissile material cut-off treaty: An idea whose time has come". A few years later, however, he followed up with a more sombre article: "A fissile material cut-off treaty: an idea whose time has passed". Indeed, despite much support, particularly in the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations of resolution 48/75, several States, notably in South Asia, could not accept the United States' proposals, even though the Clinton proposal

included special attention to restrictive arrangements for certain regions. This again demonstrated the handicap of a freeze proposal; for background, you might recall the 1998 test explosions in that region. What resulted was the so-called Shannon mandate, with which you are familiar, and the existence of an ad hoc committee to negotiate the fissile materials ban. At no point did anything promising come from that committee.

In 2012, in an effort to break the impasse, the Government of Canada, supported by several other States, including the Netherlands, took the initiative to create a group of governmental experts, which met in 2014 and 2015, to work on the topic. It produced a consensus report, which is still worth reading. In 2017 and 2018, another group met, tasked to translate the substance into treaty articles. I was a member of both groups, which were both chaired by Canadian diplomats.

I will focus on the work of the group of governmental experts, which is where the broadest substantive debates took place. The matter is complicated and time here too short to go into detail, but the crux of our discussions was the three pillars of a potential treaty: scope, definitions and verification. These three aspects are interrelated: a change in definitions has an impact on the scope and verification of treaty obligations. I start with definitions. There is still no universally accepted definition of what constitutes fissile material for weapons purposes. Even the term “fissile material” is not precisely defined.

In a paper for the second group of governmental experts, I argued that the definition should be “unirradiated direct use material as defined by IAEA”. That definition is not universally accepted, although some people were convinced at the time.

The question therefore remains of how much pure plutonium needs to be in the isotope 239 and how much highly enriched uranium must be in the isotope 235 to count as suitable for weapons purposes: 20 per cent? 60 per cent? One expert argued 90 per cent, which would probably rule out the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, which was made of fissile materials.

How we define fissile materials for weapons purposes has an impact on the verification system. If very strict definitions are adopted, few facilities around the world would be suitable to produce such materials and the task to determine that the facilities are not producing fissile material for weapons purposes would become easier. Production for civilian purposes would remain possible and should be verified, as would non-proscribed production for military purposes, such as naval propulsion. Some of these verification activities would be challenging, but they are essentially no different from what IAEA inspectors do every day. The question remains, however, of whether the inspection objectives should be the same. The term “non-discriminatory” in the mandate certainly points in that direction, but identical treatment could be considered a waste of resources. The group of governmental experts discussed at length whether it would be preferable to take a focused approach, only verifying the facilities that handle weapons material, or a comprehensive approach. The question is, what is sufficient for the effective verification of a treaty?

There is much to be said for IAEA carrying out such inspection tasks under a future treaty. Rough calculations, made long ago, which depend on certain assumptions about parties and facilities, concluded that an inspectorate would need to be twice the size of the present IAEA inspectorate. However, the group of governmental experts did not reach consensus on the matter. One concern related to the sensitivity of the data that the inspectors would collect, even though nobody disputed the Agency’s excellent record on that score. A solution could be that verification for the fissile material cut-off treaty would be a separate part of the inspectorate, somewhat comparable to the Iraq action team 20 years ago.

The other concern was to do with the IAEA governance structure; the Board of Governors is not optimal for matters related to a fissile material cut-off treaty. It is understandable that a State party to the treaty that has at some point produced nuclear-weapons material but has given up that right would want to be closely involved in the decision-making process, but not all parties would necessarily be represented on the Board.

There are therefore some issues that still need to be negotiated. There could be a hybrid structure with a standalone treaty organization that farms out verification activities to IAEA. We discussed other issues of scope, including export restrictions.

I have mentioned the two occasions when proposals for a fissile material cut-off treaty floundered, in the 1950s and 1990s. In both cases, one or more States considered it not in their interests to start negotiating. That also appears to be the case today. Production of fissile material for weapons purposes currently takes place in several countries. You might have read the recent report published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute report, which stated that five States are producing more nuclear weapons. If unofficial figures are any guidance, the increase is in the order of 10 nuclear weapons per year. Of course, it is not for me to say what constitutes a sufficient nuclear deterrent for the States concerned. I would note, however, that if negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty start now, and if we arrive at the adoption of a treaty in a few years' time, with entry into force a few years later, by that time, some of those States could have nuclear forces comparable with the smaller nuclear-weapon States today. With that time frame in mind, now is a more suitable time than ever to agree on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which could bring some measure of stability and would function as a break on further destabilizing trends in a new nuclear arms race. I would therefore urge a start to negotiating fissile material cut-off treaty in the very near future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. De Klerk for his contribution and now give the floor to Thomas Fetz.

Mr. Fetz (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Good morning, Madam President and colleagues. Thank you, Madam President, for inviting me to take part in this plenary discussion. It is an honour to be here with such distinguished panellists. I would like to review some of the work already done on a fissile material cut-off treaty, and share with you Canada's views on the way forward. As the other speakers have already covered much of the subject, I can shorten my presentation. I would nevertheless like to highlight a few pertinent historical facts. Canada believes that a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices would greatly advance disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. The negotiation of such a treaty was first officially recommended in a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, some thirty years ago. As my colleagues have already mentioned, in March 1995, Ambassador Gerald Shannon presented his report to the Conference on Disarmament, containing the Shannon mandate instructing the ad hoc committee to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The report also states that "the mandate for the establishment of the ad hoc committee does not preclude any delegation from raising for consideration in the ad hoc committee any of the above noted issues". That point relates to the scope of the treaty, in particular as regards the inclusion of previous production and stocks. The ad hoc committee provided for in document CD/1299 was finally set up by the Conference in 1998 and met for three weeks, but it did not produce a negotiating mandate and never met again in subsequent years. Over the next fifteen years, the Conference on Disarmament made several unsuccessful attempts to adopt and implement a substantive programme of work which would include the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

(*spoke in English*)

The group of governmental experts met from 2014 to 2015, and my fellow panellists have already elaborated on the work done, chaired by Canada's Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament at the time, Elisa Goldberg.

The group discussed key aspects of a potential fissile material cut-off treaty, such as definitions, scope, verification, and legal and institutional matters. It produced a consensus report, noting that CD/1299, and the mandate therein, continued to provide the most suitable basis on which future negotiations could commence without further delay in the Conference on Disarmament. It would allow negotiators to consider all aspects of a treaty, including its scope.

Building on the work of the group of governmental experts, the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group was established and met from 2017 to 2018, also chaired by a Canadian Ambassador, Heidi Hulan. The high-level expert preparatory group included 25 States; non-participating States were invited to share views in informal meetings in New York. The resulting report built on the work of the group of governmental

experts and covered a wide range of issues relevant to a fissile material cut-off treaty, including definitions, scope, verification, legal and institutional arrangements, as well as the potential treaty's preamble and aspects related to transparency and confidence-building, in respect of which, the report provided possible treaty elements and some potential considerations for negotiators. In several areas, the report provides a list of options that attempt to capture the full range of views. Together with the report of the group of governmental experts, it provides a solid basis for future negotiations. The high-level expert preparatory group recommended that negotiations on a treaty should begin without delay, based on the Shannon mandate. It also noted that further work was needed to elaborate various verification regime models to determine how they might work in practice. Transparency and confidence-building measures could potentially play an important role.

Additional work could be done to assess the resource implications of the possible verification and institutional models. The report added, however, that, while the experts deemed such work to be worthwhile, they did not consider it a prerequisite to the immediate commencement of treaty negotiations. After the conclusion of the work of the high-level expert preparatory group, substantive discussions on a fissile material cut-off treaty took place in many forums, in particular the Conference on Disarmament, where subsidiary bodies were created in 2017 and 2022.

Canada remains of the view that a treaty on fissile materials, supported by all key States and effectively verified, could be a critical, practical and specific step towards nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament.

Unfortunately, it has now been 30 years since the first United Nations General Assembly resolution on this issue, and politically we are no closer to the start of negotiations on such a treaty. In some ways, we may be even further away. Although the Shannon mandate initially enjoyed consensus, it was never implemented despite significant efforts in the Conference on Disarmament, the work of the group of governmental experts and the high-level expert panel, as well as the adoption of countless resolutions by the General Assembly.

After 30 years of trying more or less the same thing again and again, we are doubtful that we will come to a different outcome in the Conference on Disarmament. What is needed now is a different approach, including demonstrating maximum flexibility and taking bold steps. We should all minimize the preconditions for coming to the negotiating table, in particular whether to include existing stocks in the negotiations. The Shannon mandate is flexible enough to discuss existing stocks and the negotiating table is the place to see whether agreement can be found in that regard.

There are various ways of dealing with such stocks, including by creating a framework treaty with separate protocols to deal with future production and existing stocks. A proposal along those lines was made by Brazil some time ago. There are undoubtedly other options for dealing with existing stocks. But the best way to do so is by negotiating. Let us stop insisting on solving all problems at the procedural level before negotiating, and instead address them at the substantive level during negotiations.

The Conference on Disarmament is an appropriate forum for negotiating a fissile material treaty because its membership comprises the key States required. Non-nuclear-weapon States are already party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which prohibits them from producing fissile materials for nuclear weapons. Membership of the Conference includes Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty nuclear-weapon States and other States possessing nuclear weapons. That said, if the Conference on Disarmament remains paralysed by multiple long-standing issues, such as its failure to agree on a programme of work and procedural vetoes being used to block substantive work, perhaps we need to look elsewhere. Ultimately, the forum for negotiating the fissile material cut-off treaty is probably a secondary issue while political will and confidence-building are lacking.

Finally, some States view a treaty on fissile materials as potentially detrimental to their national security. In Canada's view, starting negotiations on a treaty on fissile materials, even in the absence of preconditions, would not endanger any country's national security. Ultimately, nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament are in the national security interests of all States. Whether States can negotiate a strong treaty on fissile materials that will, over time, acquire the support of all relevant States, remains to be seen. The best

way to get there is to start negotiating. Agreeing to the start of negotiations means that all participating States are prepared to negotiate in good faith. There is no guarantee of success. Beginning negotiations would not require States to surrender their national security interests. All States that come to the table will still have the normal range of options for participating in the treaty. Starting good faith negotiations does not oblige States to sign or ratify the treaty if the outcome is not satisfactory. There are many treaties that did not receive universal support on adoption, to which, in some instances, States have acceded decades later – for instance the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Canada therefore calls on the Conference on Disarmament members to commence negotiations on a treaty on fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices as a matter of urgency. In the interim, we call for confidence-building measures, including upholding moratoriums on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and transparency with regard to national implementation of those moratoriums. We must build the trust needed to support negotiations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Fetz for his statement and all our panellists for this very interesting presentation as an introduction to an interactive debate, and I invite those delegations that wish to put questions to the panellists to so indicate. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. In Den Bosch (Netherlands): Thank you, Madam President, and allow me to thank you for organizing this thematic panel discussion on item 2, prevention of nuclear war, including on all related matters. Let me also thank the panellists for the historical overview and their thought-provoking presentations, which will really help the Conference going forward.

In addition to aligning with the statement by the European Union and the joint statement delivered by the representative of Ukraine on behalf of a group of States, I would like to make some remarks and pose a question to the panel in my national capacity.

As recently as 7 December last year, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted with 171 votes in favour, 3 against and 8 abstentions in to approve the resolution co-sponsored by Canada, Germany and the Netherlands, urging the Conference on Disarmament to immediately commence negotiations on the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein.

Thus far, those negotiations have not begun and, worse still, nobody in this room expected them to. In the current geopolitical climate, with increased tensions and risks, this is of great concern to my capital, and I hope to all Member States represented in this room.

As Ms. Maître has already said, 30 years have now lapsed since the adoption of the consensus resolution by the General Assembly of the United Nations, recommending the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material.

What can we do to break the deadlock? Some of the panellists have offered some thought-provoking ideas. Much has been said about it in the past. The time has come to move from words to deeds. What can we do now? What I am going to say is not new – that would be next to impossible after 30 years!

I would like to propose three steps to come out of deadlock and stimulate the discussion in the Conference.

First, the Non-Proliferation Treaty nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility to bear. Thus far, four out of five have declared a moratorium on the production of fissile material. We therefore call on China to do the same. It is a matter of political will. It can be done. It can be done here and it could be today. The nuclear-weapon States would be setting an example for others to follow.

Second, to create the necessary climate of trust among nations to enable nuclear disarmament, we need to intensify efforts to increase transparency both on doctrines and on nuclear arsenals. Two meetings of the Conference on Disarmament have already been dedicated to that. A common ground should be established for dialogue and negotiation. We

also need to think about strengthening verification. The motto “trust but verify”, has been overtaken by events. But what about verify to rebuild trust?

Third, why try to sort out all outstanding issues before opening negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material? Why not start and try to solve these issues during the negotiations? It has been done before. Let us never negotiate out of fear but let us never fear to negotiate.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement and now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Berkat (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Thank you very much, Madam President. Thank you for organizing this thematic debate on an important item on the Conference’s agenda. In response to your request for an interactive debate, I would like to share a few points and, above all, ask a few questions.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

As part of this interactive debate, I would like to thank the speakers for reminding us of the legal and historical background to the discussion on the prevention of nuclear war and, in particular, the subject of fissile material. This is a very important reminder for the Conference on Disarmament as it tries to reach a compromise on the consideration of this important subject. I would like to say that this subject, especially that of fissile material, is both old and new in the context of discussions held within the Conference.

In the statements, we heard extensive explanations being given about the comprehensive framework established as a result of the work carried out by the General Assembly of the United Nations and various task forces, as well as the work carried out within the Conference over the years. Proposals have been put forward and great efforts have been made by member States. I refer, for example, to the role played by the former Algerian Ambassador, Mr. Hocine Meghlaoui, as special coordinator in 1996, and the working paper submitted by Algeria in 1998 to contribute to collective efforts to find solutions on this issue.

I will be brief: as mentioned in the statements, there is a need for a new approach and for a new vision. We need to think carefully and collectively in order to be able to come up with agreed solutions. The recent discussions about fissile material that were held in the Conference, especially in subsidiary body 2 in 2022 and 2018, show that there is ongoing tension between two main approaches: one is focused on nuclear disarmament and the other on non-proliferation. Quite simply, we need to reconcile these two approaches, which could lead to the formulation of a new approach.

My question to the speakers is about how they see the prospects for revitalizing the Conference’s negotiating mandate. We have been working hard together for years within this Conference, and we look forward to hearing views from the outside about this. How do they see this? What are their thoughts on getting out of this impasse, which is also an intellectual one, regarding the reactivation of the Conference’s mandate and being able to move forward? There is a need for flexibility, but flexibility on both sides, and for consensus on a new approach that reconciles the two main approaches that I mentioned. In short, there has been a great effort made inside and outside the Conference. We have now come to a standstill. We are at an impasse, and we need these ideas from outside, given that this topic is always on the agenda and always discussed.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement, and now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Omarov (Kazakhstan): Thank you, Madam President, for convening today’s meeting, with a particular focus on a fissile material cut-off treaty, and thanks to all panellists for their reports and presentations. I have a few questions.

First, to Mr. De Klerk: Have the reports of the groups of governmental experts been considered by the Conference on Disarmament? If so, what was the outcome? What were the obstacles to considering those reports at this Conference?

To Mr. Fetz: in the event that negotiations take place outside the Conference on Disarmament, will they be on the basis of the Shannon mandate or something else?

Lastly, not a question but just an opinion: I do not agree that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is less practical than the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is already being enforced and implemented by many countries and, as such, is indeed a practical step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the prevention of the nuclear war.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Kazakhstan and give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Sánchez de Lerín García-Ovies (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Madam President. I see that the delegates' questions revolve around the same idea, and so does mine. Taking into account the preparatory work of the high-level group and the group of governmental experts and the positions of the different actors, the question we are asking ourselves and that we put to the panellists today is: what steps should the Conference take to launch the negotiations? In other words, how can we define the negotiation framework, bearing in mind that all positions must be respected? Because there is an underlying impression, which I sometimes share, that behind these intransigent positions that seek to negotiate the treaty before starting the negotiation, there is a real desire not to negotiate.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Spain. Do any other delegations have questions for the panellists? I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Ali Abadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Madam President. Let me also thank the distinguished panellists for their insight and contributions to the Conference on Disarmament, specifically on the history and the prospects for the fissile material cut-off treaty. The main issue is that debate on these specific matters has been ongoing for 30 years. How are we going to ensure that our efforts do not result in another discriminatory instrument like the Non-Proliferation Treaty?

The question remains, do we want another instrument that creates two categories of States – haves and have nots – based on current stockpiles, while banning them for the rest of the world?

There is another question regarding verification mechanisms. Do we want to have a fully-fledged organization to verify Member States' compliance with the Treaty, as we do for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, or will we give the mandate to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)? Would giving the mandate to IAEA create the same circumstances as we have around the Non-Proliferation Treaty, whereby States not party to the Treaty verify the obligations of States parties? Complications may arise from giving the members of a pre-existing institution, like IAEA, a mandate to verify the compliance of other States with an international instrument.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I have no other delegations on our list at this stage. I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Elghitany (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Madam President, for giving my delegation the floor. We also thank you for organizing this important discussion on a topic that is not new, one has been on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament for more than four decades.

(*spoke in English*)

First, I thank the panellists for the comprehensive review of the background to the fissile material cut-off treaty. As a non-nuclear-weapon State and a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Government of Egypt considers a fissile material cut-off treaty as an essential tool for proceeding with disarmament. The Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference identified 13 steps for achieving nuclear disarmament, step 3 of which clearly indicated that the Conference on Disarmament should start negotiations based on the Shannon mandate. The same guidance was reiterated by the 2010 Review Conference, in actions 15 and 16 of the action plan on disarmament. My delegation considers that the only value a fissile material cut-off treaty could add to the existing regime would be if it included a disarmament objective, which can only be achieved by including existing stocks.

I would like to be frank at this stage. We fully share the views on the value of a fissile material cut-off treaty, but determining the objective and scope is essential for the credibility of the discussion. Under the current regime, non-nuclear-weapon States have all their fissile material subject to the International Atomic Energy Agency comprehensive safeguards regime, as an obligation under NPT. A fissile material cut-off treaty would therefore have no further value if it neglected to include existing stocks. This does not, however render it impossible to engage in negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. We were very close to finding a positive way forward in 2009, under the Algerian presidency. However, the lack of continuity in the work of the Conference on Disarmament meant that we were unable to take this progress forward in the years that followed.

That having been said, there have also been some other interesting comments on the dimensions of a possible fissile material cut-off treaty, for example, during the discussions in the group of governmental experts in 2014 and 2015. There was an Egyptian member of the group; there were interesting views on the scope of the material that a prospective treaty would include. While some wished to focus on two elements of fissile material, others would have preferred to broaden the scope to include elements other than plutonium and highly enriched uranium.

My question is: what would the panellists consider to be the value of a fissile material cut-off treaty that does not include existing stocks for the non-proliferation and disarmament?

We do not share the view that we should stop trying to have this discussion in the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference was crafted in a manner that includes those who really have the capability. The question is whether we just want to send a political signal, or we want to achieve a real, efficient, effective treaty that is verifiable and meets our long-standing aspirations. Attempting to take these treaty negotiations outside the Conference of Disarmament may send a correct political signal but will not address the root causes of the issues that we are trying to solve.

We were very close to success in 2009. We should proceed towards that. It is possible, but we need an honest and serious discussion about it in the Conference on Disarmament.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Egypt and give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Francese (Italy) (*spoke in French*): Thank you very much, Madam President. My country's position, which is well known, will be presented again during the next meeting, but allow me to join in this interesting debate because I think that, with just the questions that colleagues have asked already, we would have enough material to work on for several meetings this year, perhaps even more. I think a lot has already been said. I just wanted to ask a specific question, which I think is essential in terms of trust, and which concerns the moratorium on the production of fissile materials. This is a point that has been debated both at the Conference and in the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and on which positions are well known. I would like to ask the panellists if they think a temporary moratorium could change the positions of certain countries and pave the way for negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. That has happened in the past with other treaties, notably on nuclear testing, and I think a moratorium could help, over a period of time to be determined – and perhaps you also have an opinion on this – to create the confidence we need at the Conference or elsewhere, and perhaps also give us a temporary window for effective negotiations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Italy. I have no more speakers on the list for questions. I suggest we now come back to the panel, in order, starting with Emmanuelle Maître.

Ms. Maître (Fondation pour la recherche stratégique) (*spoke in French*): Thank you very much, and thank you for your questions. First of all, I think the proposals and points put forward by the Dutch Ambassador are very positive. In terms of the prospects and the way forward, as many speakers have said – and bearing in mind that we are looking at a political stalemate rather than a technical problem – I think it is absolutely vital to consider where it is most important to strike a balance. Obviously, the question of flexibility is important, it is a question that has to be asked, and there are undoubtedly things that can be done, but we

really have to think about striking the right balance so that we do not lose States that were attached to the negotiation format here at the Conference, for example. We need to ask ourselves, as I touched on in my presentation, which should be the key States to take part in the negotiations. Perhaps it is too ambitious to ask or demand that the nine States that possess nuclear weapons take an active part in the negotiations, but we must realize that if the only States involved in the negotiations are either non-nuclear-weapon States or States that have already adopted a moratorium, we will undoubtedly have a problem of balance in that regard, and a much less effective treaty. All proposals to, so to speak, tweak the format or change the way things are done must take into account and weigh up all that may be lost as a result of such a decision.

The other point on which we need to strike a balance is the way we approach negotiations. Obviously, it is important not to set too strict preconditions, which could risk completely locking the negotiating framework and negotiating the treaty before we have even negotiated it, or, once again, having something too strict upstream. But, at the same time, it is essential for States to have a pretty clear idea of why they are negotiating and what they are going to negotiate, in order to avoid major misunderstandings or blockages that would arise only too soon. A third balance, which I think is important, has already been largely struck in this forum, and that is between, on the one hand, the preparatory work, the technical work to come up with solutions and proposals and to be clear about exactly where we are heading and, on the other, the political debate, which remains essential. I think it is important to recognize that, as I said, we are currently facing a political and strategic stalemate. Some States believe that it is not in their interest to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile materials, so the only real solution is to convince these States that they have a strategic interest in halting the production of fissile materials on a global level. Why is this in their strategic interest? I would say that, if a State opposes this treaty today, it is because it believes that it probably needs to produce more fissile material to ensure a credible deterrent.

The current strategic context is such that there is a real risk of some kind of arms race in many regions. We can therefore say that, as long as we do not have this type of treaty and restrictive measures, it is not just a State that can continue to produce, but also its potential adversaries, and that really produces a negative spiral. I think that, as Ambassador De Klerk said, the current context and the environment in which we find ourselves are really conducive to reviewing this strategic analysis and asking ourselves whether there is not a real interest in implementing regulatory measures. As I have just said, we can clearly see in the current context the risk of an arms race at global and regional levels. Of course, this does not mean that all nuclear-weapon States are planning to increase their stockpiles of nuclear weapons, let alone fissile material. That is not at all the case today, but one might wonder whether, against the current backdrop of a deteriorating strategic situation, and perhaps in the near future, one of expanding arsenals in several States, there will always be such an appetite among certain nuclear-weapon States which, up until now, have been very broadly in favour of a moratorium and a fissile material cut-off treaty, for considering it a priority in the more distant future. So I think that there is a real point in restating this strategic calculation today.

As to the extent to which a treaty banning the production of fissile material is a non-proliferation and disarmament measure, I think it has the advantage of being a measure that combines these two objectives, which are by no means mutually exclusive: non-proliferation, obviously, which is an additional commitment made by non-nuclear-weapon States, but also disarmament, which sets very clear quantitative constraints on the volumes of nuclear weapons that can be produced. Clearly, a fissile materials cut-off treaty lies at the heart of different disarmament approaches. It is key to the step-by-step disarmament approach, as can be seen, for example, in all the discussions on how to implement verified disarmament, such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, mentioned in this panel. The matter of a treaty is systematically seen as a prerequisite for this type of approach. However, even in the context of other approaches, and in particular that of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, this does not preclude discussion of the kind pursued in the framework of a fissile material cut-off treaty, as the debate on the elimination of nuclear weapons could not ignore a treaty of that kind if nuclear-weapon States were to adhere to it in order to ensure its credibility and verifiability. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in French*): Thank you very much for that clarification. I give the floor to Mélanie Rosselet to continue this exchange.

Ms. Rosselet (Commissariat à l'énergie atomique et aux énergies alternatives (French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission) and the École Normale Supérieure) (*spoke in French*): Thank you. I have little to add to what Emmanuelle Maître has said. To answer the question of how to break the deadlock at the Conference, I think we need a paradigm shift in this forum and a realization that one of the challenges here must be to avoid a new arms race, and that the phase we are in is probably not one that will enable us to make enormous radical progress; that reminds us of the relevance of the step-by-step approach to disarmament, as well as of a logic that looks to the future, observes the gathering clouds and tries to limit the damage. So the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials is entirely appropriate, and must be without preconditions. In fact, the Shannon mandate makes it possible to deal with and take into account many of the objections raised, which is why it is so important to launch these negotiations without delay and without preconditions, because this subject is one of the most mature in this forum. As far as stockpiles and the risk of an asymmetrical situation are concerned, I cannot decide for other States, but when France says it is prepared to enter into negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, then in some way, knowing that its stockpiles are smaller than those of a large number of nuclear-weapon States, it must be prepared to accept this asymmetry. If it concludes that such a situation is not inconsistent with guarantees of its own security, it does so based on its perception of how best to ensure that security, and also based on its sense of responsibility and because this is what it wants to project to the international community in order to build trust. One of the key objectives of the next few years will be to find ways of restoring this climate of trust and discussion, and negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials, which will be long and complicated, could in fact send such a signal and be an instrument around which we can talk. My final point, on the moratorium, is, I repeat, that, if we look to the future and take into account the risks we face, I believe this measure is urgently needed.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Madam Rosselet and now turn to Tong Zhao.

Mr. Zhao (Nuclear Policy Programme, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace): Regarding encouraging a Chinese moratorium on fissile material production, there is an increasing need for top-level diplomacy. Heads of State and other senior politicians from the international community should directly engage with China's Paramount Leader, given the growing importance of his personal role in China's domestic decision-making system. That is the best way to resolve the issue of political will. China has concerns about joining nuclear arms control measures. But to commit more explicitly to a fissile material cut-off treaty or to an explicit moratorium on fissile material production would be, theoretically, less challenging steps for China to take. This requires international diplomacy at a very senior level. It would be a very useful measure for China to take to reassure the international community.

I also want to raise the importance of expert engagement. Again, issues like AUKUS significantly shape China's position on fissile material and a potential cut-off treaty. It is widely recognized, for example, that it would be very difficult for Australia to unload highly enriched uranium fuel in the submarine during normal military operations. Yet Chinese experts continue to make the opposite argument. They consider the proliferation risk of the sealed reactors in the submarines to be much higher than internationally recognized. The international community, especially the expert community, should engage directly on the matter with Chinese technical experts. A substantive and extensive technical exchange is needed to resolve those obvious misunderstandings.

Regarding near-term steps, there is room for bilateral or multilateral arrangements among the major nuclear powers. Research conducted by international scholars has demonstrated that there are readily available transparency measures that can be taken bilaterally between the United States and China, or trilaterally between the United States, Russian Federation and China, or as a matter of discussion for the P5. These countries can use their national technical means to verify each other's moratorium on fissile material production for weapons purposes. They can also arrange mutual or multilateral inspections

to contribute to verification. These measures can be taken as near-term confidence-building steps, either bilaterally or multilaterally, among the major nuclear powers.

Lastly, there is room for a regional mechanism for greater transparency in East Asia. China, for example, traditionally has concerns about Japan's civilian plutonium stockpile. At the same time, China's own civilian breeder reactors and reprocessing capabilities are receiving increasing international attention. There is growing discussion in the Republic of Korea about future nuclear options. The concerns that these countries have about each other warrant the establishment of a regional transparency mechanism, through which these countries could improve their transparency towards each other and increase international confidence.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Zhao and now give the floor to Piet de Klerk, to whom several questions have been directly addressed.

Mr. De Klerk (International expert): I would like to thank the participants in this debate for their very interesting questions. Let me preface my answers by saying that I am not the best person to respond to questions about the next steps in the Conference on Disarmament, especially on procedural matters. But let me echo my French colleagues who said that while the Conference on Disarmament remains stuck on procedural matters a new nuclear arms race is brewing. In that regard, the recent report published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute was alarming, in that, for the first time since 1986 the number of nuclear weapons is growing again. That is the context in which you need to decide which course of action to take.

The distinguished representative of Algeria asked whether we should start negotiating on nuclear disarmament rather than on a fissile material cut-off treaty. My answer would be that the topic is too broad and undifferentiated. To have a specific negotiating goal, disarmament needs to be broken down. A fissile material cut-off treaty, with all its advantages and possible disadvantages, would be one specific step.

Regarding the outcomes of the group of governmental experts reports, these are publicly available. The first analyses the different elements of a potential fissile material cut-off treaty. The outcome is rather meagre; the report contains several procedural recommendations aimed at the General Assembly and States. The value of the report, however, is much greater than simply its conclusions; it contains an analysis of the various aspects, which charts the way forward, taking account of all the difficulties involved.

I did not mention existing stocks, so let me say something surprising and provocative: the issue of existing stocks is not an issue at all. A cut-off of future production is a specific task that can be verified, be it by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) or a stand-alone organization. We all know that States have existing stock. At least three have published what they think they have produced; what was produced half a century ago is not always very well known and has not necessarily been recorded. The real question on existing stocks is what you want to achieve when you say that they should be taken into account. Is the intention declarations or verification? Although we are talking about production that took place many years ago, do you want to limit the States involved by the use they can make of that material? Those questions would need to be considered, and there will doubtless be disagreements. Several speakers have said a moratorium would be very helpful to build confidence, but at the same time, I agree with Mr. Zhao it would, in several cases, require high-level diplomacy.

Lastly, I come to the interesting questions raised by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. An important question is whether to give responsibility for verification to IAEA, as was the case for verification of commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In essence, I agree that there is a parallel there between the verification requirements of a future fissile material cut-off treaty and IAEA verification of NPT commitments. In the case of fissile material cut-off treaty, however, there are certain complications that were not an issue in the case of the latter treaty; these differences need to be analysed carefully. If, for example, the key participating States in a fissile material cut-off treaty were not represented on the Board of Governors, the Board might need to form a subcommittee where decisions could only be made by consensus.

Regarding whether a fissile material cut-off treaty might perpetuate discrimination between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, that may be true. But it would reduce the gap between the two categories of States by freezing the production of nuclear material.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. De Klerk and now give the floor to Thomas Fetz.

Mr. Fetz (Canada): I also thank delegations for their comments and questions. Many of your questions have been answered by my fellow panellists, but perhaps I can add a few comments.

The Canadian Government agrees with the Netherlands that we should start negotiations.

On the question raised by Algeria regarding how to break the stalemate, we are grateful to Algeria for the work done in support of a fissile material cut-off treaty. It can indeed be difficult to deal with the real strategic issues behind the facade of discussions in the Conference on Disarmament. We need to address those issues by making gradual progress towards complete nuclear disarmament, building confidence and dealing with the tense international environment. We need to take delegations seriously when they raise objections in the Conference on Disarmament to the possibility of negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty or other agreements and arrangements in the Conference on Disarmament. Many of these objections are indeed of a procedural nature and often procedural vetoes are used to block progress. Often in the Conference on Disarmament, we appear more concerned about preserving the integrity of the rules of procedure than anything else. From that perspective, my delegations believes that we should scale down our emphasis on procedure and start getting to the substance; the best way to get to the substance is to start negotiations. The comprehensive and balanced programme of work to which the Conference on Disarmament aspires is a wonderful ideal, but the Conference has never agreed on it, which has become an excuse for not making progress. Procedural objections should therefore be scaled down.

Regarding whether fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations should be taken outside the Conference on Disarmament and if so, what mandate would be used, the forum for negotiation is not the main issue; what really counts is having all the key States on board, at least eventually when we reach agreement on a treaty. All key parties are present in the Conference. Moving the negotiations elsewhere could potentially be a way of dealing with some of the endless procedural objections in the Conference on Disarmament and the straitjacket that we are subjected to when every little procedural matter is vetoed. Where there is political will, the forum is easily found. If the Conference on Disarmament fails to make progress, perhaps we should start reflecting on a different forum. This is probably not the first thing that needs to be considered. The same people doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome is the definition of insanity and we will have to reckon with that. Of course, first and foremost, we must make every effort in the Conference on Disarmament.

The Ambassador of Spain spoke about hidden positions that lie behind the objections in the Conference on Disarmament. As I said, we need to take seriously what States tell us and address those matters before addressing the hidden issues during the negotiations.

The point made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran about “haves” and “have nots” and whether the International Atomic Energy Agency would be the appropriate verification regime, has been addressed, to a large extent, already by my colleagues. In an ideal world we all want to be equal, and this could perhaps be the case if we can achieve the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

Negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty is a step in that direction, until we get there, you know, we have unequal status in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, we have unequal status in so many ways at the United Nations Security Council, and these are unfortunate realities of life. If we take a step-by-step approach to complete nuclear disarmament, this will bring us closer to an egalitarian world.

On the question posed by the representative of Egypt about including existing stocks, I agree with my colleagues that a fissile material cut-off treaty could assist in addressing the

arms race and assist with non-proliferation and arms control. It has value from that perspective. Starting negotiations, perhaps establishing a framework treaty, as proposed by Brazil, might eventually lead also to the fissile material cut-off treaty progressing further, dealing with existing stocks and becoming a stronger disarmament treaty. But we will never get there if we do not start.

Lastly, my delegation believes that a moratorium is an important confidence-building measure, which is welcome in both the context of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and a potential fissile material cut-off treaty. It is a specific, practical step that can be undertaken even in the absence of full agreement on a fissile material cut-off treaty, and it would help us move forward.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Fetz and all the panellists for a debate that was both interactive, as we had hoped, and also very instructive. I now propose to move on to the third part of this meeting, and we have just time for the national statements. I believe China has a further question for the panellists. I give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Ji Zhaoyu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Madam President. I would like to begin by thanking the panellists for sharing their personal views, although I personally disagree with many of those views. Actually, this is not so much a question as a comment. Since many colleagues have mentioned the issue of production moratoriums, I wish to emphasize that, if they want other States to support or join in such unilateral and voluntary initiatives, they must above all demonstrate the practical value and significance of such measures.

I take this opportunity to reiterate that China has never been convinced of the practical significance of a so-called production moratorium because it has no clear definition and scope, and because it cannot be verified. On the contrary, it will interfere with the international community's efforts to promote the negotiation of the best possible treaty. Notably, among the nuclear-weapon States that have declared production moratoriums, some have had large stocks of weapons-grade fissile material since the cold war; some have arrangements for transferring weapons-grade fissile material between allies, and production moratoriums do nothing to prevent them from expanding their nuclear arsenals; and some have openly announced increases in the upper limit of their nuclear warhead stockpiles. What is more, two nuclear-weapon States that have declared production moratoriums are cooperating with a non-nuclear-weapon State in nuclear submarine development, which involves the transfer of tons of weapons-grade fissile material. Frankly, the production moratorium has become a trick used by certain States to shift the focus and deceive the world. China will not participate in such tricks.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of China for his statement, and now give the floor to the Ukrainian Ambassador.

Ms. Filipenko (Ukraine): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of 44 countries: Albania, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Italy, Ireland, Japan, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and my own country, Ukraine.

We express our deep concern over the statements made by the Russian and Belarusian officials concerning the announcement of the deployment of Russian nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, following the agreement signed between the two countries. Such actions, accompanied by the continued harsh nuclear rhetoric coming from the Russian Federation in the context of the war against Ukraine, is dangerous and irresponsible, not least in the light of Russia's decision to purportedly suspend its participation in the New START.

Belarus has been an accomplice of the Russian Federation since the start of its illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. The change in Belarus' non-nuclear status in the revised Constitution adopted last year, together with the agreement on the deployment of Russia's nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, risks escalating tensions

further. We call on the Belarussian authorities to immediately stop supporting the Russian Federation's aggressive war against Ukraine and cancel decisions that could contribute to heightening tensions in the region.

We recall the joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States, issued on 3 January 2022 on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races, which affirms, *inter alia*, that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

The Russian Federation's actions and its irresponsible nuclear rhetoric stand in stark contradiction to the commitments and principles enshrined in that statement. We call on the Russian Federation to recommit in words and deeds to the principles affirmed in the statement.

The Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine has a significant negative impact on the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. The Russian Federation's blatant contravention of its commitments under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum with Ukraine, as well as other irresponsible acts undermining nuclear safety and security in Ukraine, in particular the ongoing Russian control of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, are detrimental to fulfilling the objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The overall decline in global nuclear arsenals achieved since the end of the cold war must continue and must not be reversed. The Non-Proliferation Treaty must be upheld as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and the foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ukrainian Ambassador for her statement and now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. McKernan (United States): Thank you, to all the panellists for your very interesting comments and remarks.

Agenda item 2, the prevention of nuclear war, including all related aspects, is a topic which the United States values highly. We and many others in the Conference on Disarmament have called attention to the 2022 joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races that affirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. This year, in the Hiroshima Vision, the leaders of the Group of Seven recalled that statement, and called for the immediate commencement of long overdue negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. This is the next logical step under agenda item 2, and we therefore welcome the discussion of the topic today. The wording of the Hiroshima Vision noted that 2023 will mark the 30 years since the adoption, by consensus, of the United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for fissile material cut-off treaty. Thirty years is a long time.

While a fissile material cut-off treaty itself cannot prevent nuclear war or an arms race altogether, it would impose significant constraints. A cap on the production of new fissile material for use in nuclear weapons would be welcomed as a positive step by the vast majority of member States of the Conference on Disarmament and of the United Nations, as evidenced by the support for the annual resolution adopted by the General Assembly. The need to launch negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty is especially urgent in today's deteriorating security environment; the process could mark a positive and hopeful development, which could play a role in reducing nuclear risks.

Unfortunately, since 1995, when this Conference agreed to adopt a mandate to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty, consensus has mostly been out of reach, with two brief and unproductive exceptions in 1998 and 2009.

Furthermore, we have also heard today, both from delegations of the member States and from the panellists, about the procedural situation in the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to draw attention to the United States delegation's "food for thought" paper, which has been circulated, containing suggestions on potential ways of overcoming some of those hurdles.

Several member States have put forward various creative proposals, draft texts and draft programmes of work that have included a mandate to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. Nonetheless, negotiations and any meaningful progress have been stifled owing to continued opposition by a few States. At least one nuclear-weapon State is not even willing

to declare a self-imposed, voluntary moratorium on the production of fissile material, likely because it is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal. As we have said in many meetings of this Conference over the recent months, the Government of the United States is ready to work with Conference on Disarmament members to exercise creativity and demonstrate flexibility to begin treaty negotiations. We call on others to join that effort.

The Government of the United States understands fully that a unilateral moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is not a substitute for a negotiated fissile material cut-off treaty. At the same time, it is undeniable that it would help to build confidence and trust. A unilateral moratorium would demonstrate good-faith commitment to the objectives of a fissile material cut-off treaty, pending negotiation of the treaty. The United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Russian Federation have long maintained such moratoria. We reiterate our call to all States that have not yet done so to declare a moratorium on production immediately.

The United States continues to support treaty negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament based on the Shannon mandate, which I would like to underscore does not limit the issues that delegations may raise, including matters pertaining to stocks. This was demonstrated conclusively by the group of governmental experts and the high-level preparatory group, both of which conducted their work on the basis of the mandate contained in CD/1299 and featured extensive discussion of the stocks issue.

As was also noted by some of the panellists today, keeping in mind the sheer technical complexity of the stocks issue, particularly with respect to questions of accountability and effective verification, the United States believes that it is far more urgent and practicable to deal with the issue of new fissile material production first. While we recognize that to achieve the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, we will need at some point to address stocks, we need to start somewhere.

That is not to say that we would not expect others to raise stocks, or that we would not be prepared to talk about the issue ourselves or explore ways to build confidence. We would welcome the opportunity to address the significant steps we have taken to provide transparency regarding United States fissile material stocks, to declare any fissile material surplus to national security needs and to permanently remove this material from potential further use in nuclear weapons. Ambassador Turner laid out these points in his intervention last week, and details are available in our national report to the 2022 Review Conference of States Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Far more progress has been made in managing and reducing excess stocks than would have been possible had we linked such reductions to the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Far from stimulating progress on new production and existing stocks, such linkages have instead blocked progress on both fronts.

The commencement of formal negotiations of a fissile material cut-off treaty is long overdue. Beginning such negotiations is even more urgent in the current security environment. We are ready now. Given the importance of making progress, we are also open to new and creative solutions and formats, as the panellists have mentioned today. The important thing is that we need to take action and we need to do so now.

It has been more than 25 years since this body took up a mandate to negotiate an effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty. The United States stands ready to work with all delegations to make this negotiating mandate a reality. It is way past time for the Conference on Disarmament to get back to work.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the United States and give the floor to the representative of Sweden, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Ms. Homolková (Sweden): Thank you Madam President. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and the Republic of Moldova, the potential candidate country, Georgia and the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union attaches great importance to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control instruments that contribute to peace, security and stability. We reiterate our

condemnation of the Russian Federation's unprovoked, unjustified, and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which, together with increased tensions and continued proliferation crises underscores the need to preserve, implement and further strengthen the entire disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

Thirty years have passed since the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted by consensus a resolution that recommended the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

What was already overdue back then is now a matter of urgency. The European Union and its member States have, for many years, been at the forefront of international efforts to achieve a non-discriminatory and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

We remain convinced that a fissile material cut-off treaty would represent a concrete step towards fulfilling obligations under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and would make a significant practical contribution to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Given the growing size of some nuclear arsenals, increasing nuclear rhetoric and a serious proliferation crisis, the case for a fissile material cut-off treaty is even clearer and more urgent.

The European Union and its member States support starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in accordance with document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. Pending those negotiations and the entry into force of a potential treaty, we call on all States concerned that have not yet done so to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Until now, all nuclear-weapon States under NPT have declared such a moratorium, except China. We therefore call on China to declare and uphold such a moratorium.

Starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty is not only a priority for the European Union but is also the overwhelming will of the international community, as demonstrated in the 2010 NPT Review Conference action plan and reiterated by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 73/65, which reaffirmed the urgent need to negotiate and conclude a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

We also recall that the annual General Assembly resolution on a fissile material cut-off treaty, co-sponsored by Canada, Germany and the Netherlands, continues to receive overwhelming support. We welcome the substantial progress made on possible definitions, scope, verification and legal and institutional arrangements, and the comprehensive preparatory work carried out by the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group and the group of governmental experts. The options-based approach allowed for an in-depth consideration of every possibility. The high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group increased understanding of the challenges provided, a clear path towards future negotiations.

We also welcome the identification of substantial transparency and confidence-building measures. In this respect, we agree with the recommendation of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group that further expert work could be useful, in particular on the various verification models, to determine how they might work in practice, and the resource implications of the possible verification and institution models.

It is also important that the future treaty's preamble should include reference to, among other things, the importance of active and equal participation and leadership of women and their full involvement in the institutions of the treaty and in its efforts to maintain and promote peace and security.

The Conference has considered this issue in previous years through in-depth discussions in one of its subsidiary bodies. We welcomed the 2018 report of this body and regret that, in 2022, subsidiary body 2 was unable to approve a well-balanced report despite considerable efforts by the majority of States and especially the Spanish coordinator. The

lack of substantive progress at the Conference on Disarmament and its failure to begin negotiations that build on the substantial preparatory work already conducted is not tenable.

We are convinced that the start of fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations will not threaten anyone's national security interests and will in fact produce a safer and more stable security environment, benefiting all States. Any State with reservations about aspects of a future treaty can raise them during the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, which operates through the consensus rule.

We therefore call on all members of the Conference to demonstrate utmost flexibility and start negotiations on such a treaty without delay.

In conclusion, we would like to inform you that the European Union will submit a working paper on a fissile material cut-off treaty to the first preparatory committee of the eleventh NPT Review Conference.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Sweden, who has spoken on behalf of the European Union, and I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Mehdi (Pakistan): Thank you, Madam President, for convening the plenary meeting today on agenda item 2. We would also like to thank the panellists for their presentations.

The notion of the prevention of nuclear war is grounded in two interconnected channels: the first is nuclear disarmament, to achieve the broader objective of preventing a nuclear war; the second is measures to prevent nuclear war until the elimination of nuclear weapons. Our work under this agenda item should remain true to both themes.

The first special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations devoted to disarmament declared by consensus that "all States, in particular nuclear-weapon States, should consider as soon as possible various proposals designed to secure the avoidance of the use of nuclear weapons, the prevention of nuclear war and related objectives, where possible through international agreement, and thereby ensure that the survival of mankind is not endangered."

Subsequent General Assembly resolutions requested that the Conference on Disarmament commence negotiations on the prevention of nuclear war. The matter was added to the agenda of the Conference in 1983 under what is now agenda item 1. Since 1984, the issue of the prevention of nuclear war, including all related items, has featured as a stand-alone item on the agenda of this body.

This separation into a separate agenda item in 1984 was in response to calls to urgently address the threat of nuclear war. Several interesting proposals were put forward by member States, including Australia, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Japan and the Netherlands, which proposed a list of sub-items to be considered under this agenda item. Some of the sub-items included: commitments by States to renounce the use, or threat of use, of force in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations; obligation of all States to maintain a policy of restraint; military doctrines; regional security arrangements; confidence-building measures, in particular those aimed at the prevention of the outbreak of war, including nuclear war by surprise, accident or miscalculation; significance of military balance; stability and undiminished security of all States; and the significance of effective, negotiated, and verifiable reduction of nuclear armaments.

The salience of making progress on the prevention of nuclear war has only increased. Last year, the Secretary-General of the United Nations noted that the prospect of nuclear conflict, once unthinkable, is now back in the realms of possibility. Against this backdrop, it is essential to take concrete steps to reduce the risk of a nuclear war and make progress under this agenda item.

The increasing risks are attributable to the rise in geopolitical tensions, growing strategic asymmetries, the pursuit of absolute security and domination by powerful States, the rise of global military expenditure, unresolved disputes, and the ongoing modernization programmes of conventional and non-conventional weaponry.

The only way to deal with the problem is to address the root cause rather than focus on purely cosmetic actions. Efforts to reduce our work to cost-free measures and illusionary pursuits would only distract us from the larger goals of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war.

To make progress under this agenda item, the following considerations merit our attention: first, it is paramount that this agenda item is pursued in line with its true intent and that we discard proposals that aim to limit the item to peripheral considerations and non-proliferation measures alone. Second, under this item we must consider the fundamentals: addressing security concerns and threat perceptions covering traditional military, including nuclear, threats, as well as non-nuclear and non-military threats. Consideration should also be given to regional asymmetries and destabilizing arms build-ups, both in strategic and conventional realms. Third, the Conference must reaffirm the effective universal application of the principle of refraining from the threat or use of force in international relations to reduce the dangers of war, in particular nuclear war. Fourth, we must promote commitments to the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict resolution, and addressing long-standing disputes to prevent the development of situations that could lead to dangerous exacerbation of tensions in relations between States. Fifth, the Conference should examine the nature of security doctrines, both offensive and defensive, and their role in strategic stability. Military doctrines that envisage the pre-emptive use of force, the pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons, the resort to surprise attacks against other States or fighting a limited conventional war under the nuclear overhang, must be renounced.

Considerations of preventing a nuclear war must take account of nuclear weapons and their associated components. It remains an objective reality that any nuclear war in the foreseeable future would not be fought with what is yet to be produced, but with that which has already been produced, stockpiled, weaponized, deployed or reserved for such purposes. This brings me to the issue of fissile materials.

Pakistan's consistent position on a fissile material treaty is well known and remains unchanged. Our detailed views on various aspects of such a treaty are also contained in document CD/2036, submitted in 2015, which is based on nine overarching principles. First, the treaty should provide equal and undiminished security for all States, as recognized by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Second, the treaty should contribute both to the objectives of nuclear disarmament and to non-proliferation in all its aspects. Third, in addition to a ban on future production, the treaty must also cover the past production of fissile materials to address the asymmetries in fissile material holdings at the regional and global levels. Fourth, the treaty should neither discriminate between nuclear-weapon States, nor between the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. All States parties should assume equal obligations without any preferential treatment for any category of States. Fifth, the treaty should be free from any loopholes by encompassing all types of fissile material usable in nuclear weapons, including their potential transfers to other States parties. Sixth, the treaty should include a robust verification mechanism implemented by a representative and independent body with adequate oversight of States parties. Seventh, the treaty should promote regional and global stability and enhanced confidence among all States parties. Eighth, the treaty should not affect the inalienable right of all States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under effective safeguards preventing diversion to prohibited purposes. Lastly, the treaty should be negotiated in the Conference of on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The Conference includes all relevant stakeholders and operates strictly under the consensus rule, allowing each Member State to safeguard its vital interests. A treaty negotiated outside the Conference on Disarmament would lack legitimacy and ownership, similar to the pseudo-progress sought through divisive processes such as the group of governmental experts and the high-level expert group.

Any arms control, non-proliferation or disarmament treaty that diminishes the security of any State would be a non-starter. No State can be expected to enter negotiations on a treaty that would be detrimental to its national security, as was the case when a large group of countries refused to engage with the negotiations on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons outside the Conference on Disarmament and on many issues inside the Conference on Disarmament, including nuclear disarmament. These countries did not attempt to address

their concerns at the negotiating table when they had clarity about the impact of such measures on their security.

Pakistan believes that a treaty that only results in a cut-off in the production of fissile material as interpreted under the Shannon mandate will not contribute to nuclear disarmament. It will also not realize the broader objective of preventing nuclear war. A cut-off treaty would jeopardize regional security unless it addressed the vast asymmetries in existing stocks of fissile material, especially in our region. The situation has been compounded by the granting of a discriminatory Nuclear Suppliers Group waiver and the conclusion of bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreements. Such measures endanger regional stability in South Asia.

Of the States that possess nuclear weapons, most have either announced a unilateral moratorium on the production of fissile material or attained a level of comfort through continued national production and the conclusion of special arrangements. It is only after far greater supplies of fissile material than any foreseeable defence needs that they have since been converted to the cause of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Unlike for Pakistan, for those States a fissile material cut-off treaty would be a completely cost-free exercise, and they refer to it as a next step, purely as an optics exercise. For non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, many of which enjoy a nuclear umbrella under extended nuclear deterrence arrangements, a fissile material cut-off treaty would not entail any new obligations.

As for the view that existing stocks of fissile material are not an issue, we respectfully disagree. By any objective assessment of the history of this issue, the disagreement over the scope of the treaty is one of the major stumbling blocks to progress. It is not simply a matter of language, or a procedural or declaration issue, as has been suggested. For Pakistan, the question of stockpiles is a direct national security concern, which we have explained in detail. However, we have not heard from the States opposing the inclusion of existing stocks on how this affects their security concerns. In its proposal contained in document CD/2036, the Government of Pakistan put forward several ideas on how to reflect existing stocks, including under the following categories: fissile material for nuclear weapons, fissile material exceeding nuclear weapon requirements, fissile material for non-prescribed military use and fissile material for civilian use.

These questions can be further deliberated during treaty negotiations. However, a negotiating mandate that explicitly includes the question of existing stocks is essential to move forward. We have also listened to the references made to the work done in the group of governmental experts and the high-level expert preparatory group. Pakistan is not able to accept any conclusion or recommendation produced by either group and has rejected their reports. The conclusions of those groups can in no way constitute the basis for further consideration of the fissile material issue at the international level, whether in the Conference on Disarmament or elsewhere.

Progress on a fissile material cut-off treaty cannot be achieved by changing the format or forum, or by imposing a solution that excludes the views of major stakeholders. It has also been argued that a cut-off treaty is in the strategic interests of the States that oppose it. We would like to point out that a fissile material treaty that includes past production is in the strategic interests of all States, since it would be both a disarmament and a non-proliferation measure.

In conclusion, the time for a fissile material cut-off treaty that seeks to freeze existing asymmetry in the nuclear arsenals and fissile material stocks held by some nuclear-weapon States has long passed. This outdated proposal does not have any added value for nuclear disarmament, as is evident from the increase in the nuclear arsenals of States ostensibly committed to so-called moratoria on fissile material production. For these reasons, Pakistan will continue to oppose this discriminatory proposal. Pakistan has instead proposed a fissile material treaty that addresses the issue in all its dimensions, comprehensively, effectively and verifiably, and which explicitly includes in its scope existing fissile material stocks.

We reiterate our call to start work in earnest on developing a new basis for negotiations on a treaty, the scope of which expressly encompasses existing stocks and applies equally to all States, without discrimination.

Pakistan stands ready to work constructively in this body to advance our substantive work in pursuit of the broader objective of the prevention of nuclear war under this agenda item.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement, and now give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. Damico (Brazil) (*spoke in French*): Thank you Madam President. The delegation of Brazil thanks you for today's meeting, held under item 2 of the Conference agenda, on the prevention of nuclear war, including all related issues. We agree with the realistic, pragmatic and responsible approach you have suggested for these debates, which promote a positive programme of nuclear disarmament. Brazil shares the ideas contained in your concept paper, especially the notion of a step-by-step approach to future negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We welcome your choice of panellists, and their comments have helped us to further develop our thinking on this subject. As other speakers have already pointed out, General Assembly resolution 48/75, adopted by consensus 30 years ago, has still not been implemented, and continues to pose difficulties for several generations of diplomats. On 14 June 2010, Brazil submitted to the Conference on Disarmament document CD/1888, which has just been mentioned by Mr. Fetz. I would like to share with you the meaning of this short, one-page document, which will be 13 years old tomorrow. It is entitled "Proposal on the structure of a treaty on fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices". This document was further developed by the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group, which met in 2017 and 2018 and was chaired by Ambassador Heidi Hulan of Canada. As Mr. De Klerk and Mr. Fetz have pointed out, this preparatory group was tasked with continuing its work and to make recommendations on elements of a treaty that would have determined the fate of every aspect of a final treaty.

Madam President, Brazil's proposal, set out in detail in a working document submitted to the high-level group of experts, is a bird with wings. In the working document, which comprises just three paragraphs on a single page, Brazil proposes a framework treaty on fissile materials with additional protocols, one dealing with stocks and the other with future production of fissile materials. This structure, which in our view is quite balanced, includes one section dealing with disarmament and another with vertical non-proliferation. We believe that approaches that do not simultaneously address the disarmament and non-proliferation aspects of this issue will inevitably run into major difficulties. In all modesty, we think our approach is reasonable. In this respect, I am convinced of the relevance of the very French saying, "What is clearly thought out is clearly expressed". Nuclear devices can be assembled either with existing fissile materials, or with materials that will be produced in the future. Brazil is in favour of a fissile material cut-off treaty, but believes that limiting its scope to existing stocks of fissile material will address only non-proliferation concerns, leaving aside disarmament concerns. Disarmament is of great importance to Brazil, as well as being the *raison d'être* of this Conference.

According to the figures available to us, Madam President, stocks of fissile materials are sufficient to equip 100,000 atomic bombs, i.e. nine times the total number of these objects. Obviously, these stocks are not distributed equitably among the countries that possess nuclear weapons. The strategic, military and political implications of this fact are easy to understand. Madam President, there are very few topics that have acquired the critical mass to start moving forward. Bringing stockpiles into the equation would be a confidence-building gesture that would increase the costs of refusing to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We certainly need to work on transparency. Verification will of course always be at the heart of any arms control treaty and must be addressed at the time of negotiation. However, if we start measuring who accumulates the most, who accumulates the least or who will accumulate the most in the shortest time, we will never achieve a satisfactory result. We are therefore convinced that a negotiation process will enable delegations to move towards a global agreement that addresses both stockpiles and future production. My delegation is at your disposal to continue this debate at the next session.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Brazil and now give the floor to the Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Ali Abadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this very important session on the agenda item 2 of the Conference and join previous speakers in thanking the panellists for their well-informed insight and contribution to the Conference, on the history and prospects for a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Today, the risk of a nuclear war is still extremely high; it is regrettable that the goal of nuclear disarmament has been overdue for a long time.

The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the only way to prevent a nuclear war is the complete and irreversible elimination of all nuclear weapons under international effective control. While some States continue to possess nuclear weapons, there will always be a possible risk of nuclear war, based on the national interests of those States and their allies.

It is very unfortunate that last week the distinguished representative of one member State of the Conference of Disarmament stated in his remarks before this body that his Government may use nuclear weapons in some certain situations. While this policy might serve to heighten the security of one nuclear-weapon State in the short term, it would endanger international security, break the taboo of the use of nuclear weapons, and undermine all efforts further international peace and security in this Conference and other international fora.

In this regard, I wish to ask: who has the competency to identify the characteristics of a certain situation that actually legitimize the use of banned weapons of mass destruction? These dreadful remarks show how dangerous and near a nuclear war may be.

The only guarantee that can prevent a nuclear war is complete, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament. It is indeed a matter of concern that the obligation of nuclear-weapon States under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains to be fulfilled. As stated in the Final Document of the 1995 NPT Review Conference, as a package, pending complete and irreversible nuclear disarmament, it is essential that nuclear-weapon States assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of such weapons. I would also like to remind nuclear-weapon States of their commitment under action 5 of the action plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, to promptly discuss policies that could prevent the use of nuclear weapons and eventually lead to their elimination, lessen the danger of nuclear war, and contribute to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Reinforcing the existing discriminatory status of being categorized as a nuclear-weapon State or a non-nuclear-weapon State is not an option for us. We cannot afford another discriminatory instrument that will defeat the purpose. The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that any legally binding instrument on fissile materials should be pursued in line with the goal of nuclear disarmament and in an indiscriminate manner and should encompass the irreversible elimination of all existing stockpiles under national verifiable mechanisms.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran and give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): First of all, Madam President, let me thank you for convening today's occasion which enables us to focus on this issue of paramount importance to the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to thank the distinguished panellists for their excellent presentations and input.

Japan has long advocated a realistic and practical approach to nuclear disarmament, under which Japan, along with many other countries, prioritizes qualitative capping by comprehensively banning nuclear testing, and quantitative capping by banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We believe that the most effective instruments for realizing qualitative and quantitative capping are the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and a fissile material cut-off treaty, respectively.

Japan reiterates the importance of the immediate commencement of long overdue negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as the highest priority for the Conference on Disarmament, and regrets deeply that this august body has so far failed to start tackling this long overdue task. To breathe new life into the discussions on such a treaty, strong political will is

necessary. Prime Minister Kishida Fumio of Japan has reiterated the Japanese Government's call for the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty as a key element of the Hiroshima Action Plan, adopted at the Tenth Review Conference of the States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2022.

In addition, Japan calls for voluntary moratoria by all nuclear-weapon States on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices to be declared or maintained, without waiting for the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The importance of the immediate commencement of treaty negotiations as well as voluntary moratoria is also highlighted in the Group of Seven Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament, issued on 19 May 2023. Furthermore, this vision urges all countries to refocus political attention towards a fissile material cut-off treaty as a priority action to forestall a resumption of the nuclear arms race, including any and all independent or complementary efforts.

The General Assembly of the United Nations, in its resolution 77/76, entitled "Steps to building a common road map towards a world without nuclear weapons", which was adopted with 147 votes in favour in 2022, also "calls on the Conference on Disarmament to immediately commence, and bring to an early conclusion, negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in accordance with CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein.". Furthermore, in resolution 77/68, entitled "Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices" the General Assembly also "urges the Conference on Disarmament to immediately commence negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein.". I hope that due attention and follow-up action will be given by all to these sincere calls issued by the General Assembly.

For a long time, many countries, including Japan, have expressed their respective positions on a future fissile material cut-off treaty, and have engaged in substantive discussions in the Conference on Disarmament. While negotiations on such a treaty have not yet begun, many valuable documents have been adopted over the past several years, including the reports of the group of governmental experts in 2015, the high-level expert preparatory group in 2018 and subsidiary body 2 of the Conference on Disarmament in 2018. Furthermore, although its final report was unfortunately not adopted, we were able to have a meaningful exchange of views in subsidiary body 2 during the 2022 session of the Conference on Disarmament. Japan highly values these important efforts and documents, which present substantive elements and material related to a possible treaty and provide a solid foothold for future negotiations.

Based on these points, Japan believes that a fissile material cut-off treaty is a mature topic, ready for negotiation. Furthermore, the possible reversal of the prolonged downward trend in the number of nuclear weapons since its peak during the cold war is deeply worrying. The overall decline in global nuclear arsenals achieved since the end of the cold war must continue and must not be reversed.

Regarding the possible elements of a fissile material cut-off treaty, Japan is of the view that the main purpose of such a treaty should be to stop any increase in the amount of fissile material available to any State party for the production of nuclear weapons, as stated in document CD/1774, submitted to the Conference on Disarmament in 2006 and in line with Japan's views on a fissile material cut-off treaty, presented, as requested by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in resolution 67/53, adopted in 2013. Any activity that increases the amount of fissile material for nuclear weapons should be treated as effectively synonymous with "production". Therefore, the core obligations under a fissile material cut-off treaty must include not only prohibiting production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, but also closing or dismantling any production facilities for fissile material for nuclear weapons or converting them for civil purposes. In this regard, I note with great interest the presentation made by our distinguished panellist from France.

Japan is of the view that verification under a fissile material cut-off treaty should confirm that production of fissile material is not taking place, but it should not be limited to this. Implementation of other possible obligations should also be verified. For example, it is crucial to verify that stocks of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices have not increased from the amount declared at the date of ratification of the treaty; stock may be increased by other means than new production. The recycling of fissile material previously assigned for dismantlement, for example, can also increase stocks.

As to how to deal with existing stocks of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, this should be discussed and solved during negotiations. The inclusion of existing stocks within the scope of a fissile material cut-off treaty should not be a precondition for commencing negotiations.

Preparations for the commencement of negotiations have already been addressed extensively. The only remaining factor is political will. In view of repeated commitments to this goal, I would like to call again on all member States to demonstrate the political will to commence negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament as soon as possible.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Ambassador of Japan. It is now 1 p.m. but there is still a large number of speakers on the list. I therefore propose that the discussion continue on Thursday 15 June at 10 a.m. I would like to thank all the panellists once again for their presentations, and the delegations for this interactive debate. This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.