

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand seven hundred and nineteenth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 21 May 2024, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Ali Bahreini (Islamic Republic of Iran)

The President: I call to order the 1719th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Colleagues, as I have informed you before, today I am going to brief you about the developments around the issue of finalizing a programme of work, but before I enter into that discussion, I see that the Ambassador of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, on behalf of the Russian Federation, I would like to express our deepest sympathies on the tragic deaths of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and the persons accompanying them.

We are convinced that they will go down in history not only as outstanding political actors with unquestionable authority in the international arena, but also as true patriots of their country, who worked selflessly for the good of its people.

We would like to draw attention to their role, including within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement, in consistently championing the interests of developing States, which are increasingly pursuing an independent foreign policy. It is thanks to such important figures that the voice of the Global South has become louder, its opinion more powerful and in many ways determinative of contemporary inter-State relations.

The firm and principled position of the Islamic Republic of Iran on a wide range of issues on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament and in other disarmament forums is well known.

Ebrahim Raisi and Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made an invaluable contribution to the strengthening of relations between our two countries, applied great efforts to the shaping of the Russian-Iranian strategic partnership, the development of effective interaction on multilateral platforms and cooperation within the framework of such internationally recognized and authoritative associations as the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) group and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Our sincere condolences go to the families and close friends of the deceased, as well as to all the people of Iran. We wish you fortitude in the face of this severe, irreparable loss.

The delegation of the Russian Federation invites all those present at today's meeting to stand and observe a minute of silence in memory of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and the other passengers who perished in the helicopter crash.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your heartfelt condolences. I have to thank all colleagues who have contacted us yesterday and today conveying their condolences; they are a source of comfort for me and my colleagues in Geneva at this difficult time. The President and the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran dedicated their whole lives to peace and justice and friendship in the world and we are reminded of the role they played in promoting these principles; we count on the solidarity and support of all friends and nations to navigate through this difficult time. God bless their souls.

In fact, it is a difficult time for me to attend and chair this meeting, but I felt obliged to attend and keep my promise to brief the Conference on Disarmament about the latest developments. I thought I must not allow my condition to affect the work of the Conference.

As I told you before, today I am going to give a briefing about what we have done during our presidency, particularly with regard to developing the programme of work for the Conference. My briefing will be a little bit detailed, for two reasons. One is to keep the trend of continuity, because during this time a lot of discussions have been held, a lot of exchanges have been made, and I think it would be useful for the whole Conference to be informed about these developments, mainly because it is up to each and every member of the Conference who participates in the collective work to develop the programme of work of the Conference and then to follow it up. The second reason is that whatever we have achieved during this time is a collective achievement of all members of the Conference. I have received contributions and support from many of you during my bilateral and group meetings, and I think it would be appropriate for me to refer to the role that members of the Conference have played in the developments that we have seen during this time. For these two reasons, I am

going to give you a quite detailed report about the discussions which have been held and to explain to you where we stand now.

When we started our presidency of the Conference, I was confronted with the question of what the third presidency could be expected to do for the Conference. What can it do? And, honestly speaking, I was surrounded by lots of doubts and frustration from different sides, indicating that nothing much was expected from the third president. And that was a big challenge for me that I did not want to shy away from.

There was also rule 28 of the rules of procedure in front of me, indicating that the programme of work of the Conference should be established at the beginning of the Conference. But my interpretation was that if, at the start of the session, we have not been able to adopt a programme of work, that does not preclude efforts to continue consultations on the programme of work.

As you may remember, at the beginning of the presidency, I shared this interpretation with you and I shared the question with you: What do you expect me to do in the Conference? The Conference was in agreement with the interpretation I had that the President can and should continue consultations on developing a programme of work.

I solicited two important observations. One, if there is no programme of work, then the Conference should have some kind of alternative so that it can enter into some sort of useful thematic discussions. It is useful for the Conference to make this use of its time in order to have some substantive discussions among delegations so that we can enrich and deepen our information and knowledge and update ourselves on developments related to the agenda of the Conference. The second observation was that having such discussions should not be a substitute for a programme of work. Therefore, while working on thematic discussions, it is an imperative for the Conference and for the President to continue working and consulting to reach some agreement on a programme of work.

Based on these two observations, I followed a dual-track approach. With consultation and coordination among the six Presidents of the current session, together with the last President of the previous session and the first of the next, we agreed on having a kind of structured method of work for our substantive discussions and giving a kind of predictability to the work of the Conference with regard to thematic discussions. I think we have been able to some extent to do that, and I am sure that the next presidents are now able to share with you this week news of the discussions they are going to hold in the Conference so that the members of the Conference can be aware about the roadmap of our future discussions.

In parallel, I contacted different delegations to get their advice, their suggestions and their contribution about how to finalize or develop a programme of work. I met regional groups. I met a lot of delegations and I discussed the question with them. All these discussions were made with two objectives: one, to understand the concerns and priorities of each and every delegation so as to have a better understanding about their red lines; and, second, to receive their suggestions about how to overcome the divergence of views on the programme of work.

I continued discussing these things with different delegations several times and I got very good feedback and good contributions. There were at that time two tendencies. One was to believe that the 2022 programme of work is something that we can and should continue with – it is something which is ready – so that we do not waste our time on developing a new programme of work. It has worked a little bit and the Conference can continue working based on that programme of work. There were strong arguments in defence of this approach. The second approach was to say that the 2022 programme was not enough and, because of different developments, we need to make some improvements to the programme of work. There were also some other arguments advocating this approach.

I tried to strike a balance between these two approaches. By holding consultations with many delegations, I received suggestions, I received comments, I received contributions, and we tried to prepare a draft programme of work. When we prepared the draft programme of work, I was quite sure that many delegations would not be happy with the draft. But the draft which we had prepared was based on our impressions and our findings about how we can create a consensus among the different delegations.

The positive thing was that, when I shared the draft with delegations, I received positive feedback from every side. And every side was encouraging us to continue. Nobody stopped us. Nobody told us that this cannot be a basis for our work. And everybody found some merit in the draft text which we had prepared. And this gave us more incentive to continue working with different delegations. There were three groups of countries which I have categorized for you in order to see and understand the positions of the different groups.

When I approached the Group of 21, the Russian Federation and China, I realized that they were not happy with the text I had provided, but they supported our approach. They entered very actively into consultations with their capitals. I remember I met the Ambassador of Pakistan, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation, the Ambassador of China and many other Ambassadors from the Group of 21. I briefed them about the philosophy behind the draft text which I had prepared and I humbly asked them to support us in our efforts to bring success to the work of the Conference. They responded very positively to our request. They supported us in our approach. They entered into discussions with their capitals. A very strong political will emerged among these delegations to help the Conference overcome the problems and reach a consensus on the programme of work.

Now I can say that these delegations from the Group of 21, Pakistan, the Russian Federation and China do not object if we proceed with the draft. So I appreciate very much their approach. I understand they have made a lot of compromises. I understand they had real difficulties in convincing their capitals about our approach. And I understand that they concealed their unhappiness from us so that they can help us succeed in the collective work we are doing. This was one category.

The second category consisted of most of the Western European and Other States, who, when I met them individually, were insisting on a prompt start to the work of the Conference. Their priority was for the Conference to actually start work. They were flexible on the programme of work for the sake of getting started on the work of the Conference. This approach was also very encouraging and very positive, which helped us not to complicate the issues.

The third category that I approached consisted of the delegations of France and the United States of America, who we met several times to discuss with them and explain to them the same philosophy, the same methodology, that we have followed, and to explain to them why we think this draft text can be a basis for consensus. This group also engaged very well with our text. They did not stop us. They encouraged us to continue our approach to developing a programme of work. They did not reject the text as something that could not be worked upon. And they entered into consultation with their capitals. I know they have discussed these issues with their capitals. I remember in the first meeting I had with the French Ambassador when I shared with her the draft text, she did not have a good feeling, for example, about the kind of reference we were making to the past work of the Conference in the text. But at this time, my understanding is that they have been able, to some extent at least, though not fully, to convince their capital about our proposal on how to have a reference to the past work of the Conference on Disarmament. This shows that even these two delegations actively participated in the discussions and talked to their capitals to see how they can help. And I understand that they are not happy with the text. They still think that they need stronger language in some parts. Of course, after my presentation, each and every one of you will have the possibility of taking the floor and expressing your views if you think I am not correctly reflecting our discussions. But I believe that all these three groups have had a role in bringing us to this point where we are now.

All these developments have brought me to some conclusions. First, I think the text which we have provided has reached a sort of maturity which in our opinion can be the basis for consensus on the programme of work. The text has enough logic and warrants being presented to the Conference. The text has not disregarded the concerns of delegations. It has not satisfied everybody. I know, as I have explained, that all sides have their own observations, but the text has tried to find a compromise between different positions. It has not disregarded the concerns and priorities of delegations. We have tried to take into consideration the main issues which different delegations expected to be reflected. The issue of some kind of continuity has been reflected. The issue of how to include a reference to the

past work of the Conference in some way may not be perfect for all of us, but I think everybody is now less unhappy with the text.

This draft is the result of collective work: the collective work of those who supported our approach, those who supported our draft, those who gave us suggestions and contributions, those who took part in developing this text and even those who did not reject our text or our approach. For these reasons, I have decided to share the draft programme of work with the Conference. I think this draft is very, very close to consensus. This is the impression that I get from different sides and this assessment is based on the journey I have been on since the beginning of our presidency until now and on the feeling that I have received regarding the different possibilities. I think this is very, very close to consensus.

I therefore invite everybody, all members of the Conference, to think about finalizing this draft programme of work. If this does not take place, I invite the next presidents to continue working on it. I think not too much work is needed to finalize it and I encourage the next presidents to continue working on this draft programme of work.

One final point which I want to make is that many delegations have contributed to developing this draft programme of work. But, as you know, developments in the Conference are dynamic and any development takes place in a given context; I personally do not want to impose anything on any delegation now or in the future. This is the same with the draft which we have provided. I do not want it to impose anything on any delegation in the future. The situation is very dynamic and whatever has been achieved has been achieved in the context of trying to strike a balance, to find a compromise, and not to create any future commitments for anybody or impose anything on them. I appreciate all of you for your contribution but I do not impose anything on any of you.

In order for all these things to be clear, transparent and known to everybody, I decided to submit a working paper, contained in document CD/WP.655, to the Conference with the aim of registering the chronology of the developments and with the aim of providing the Conference with a text which could be helpful in our future endeavours to finalize the programme of work.

Continuing in this way, even if we do not reach an agreement on a programme of work for this year, will ease our job for next year. I hope that we can finalize it this year but, if not, I am sure that when we start our session next year we will have a clear picture about what can be achieved in the Conference. This is the result of more than two months of work, and it has been built upon the efforts made by the presidencies of Indonesia and before that India; therefore it represents the continuous collective effort of three presidencies of the Conference.

This is the explanation I wanted to share with you. Once again, I thank you all. I hope that the next presidents will continue seeking and will be able to reach a consensus on this draft. It is not impossible. We are very close to it.

That ends my briefing, and I now open the floor to delegations for any comments, clarifications or contributions that you might like to make.

I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Ray (India): Mr. President, let me begin by reading out a tweet by the Prime Minister of India. It says: "Deeply saddened and shocked by the tragic demise of Dr. Sayyid Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. His contribution to strengthening India-Iran bilateral relationship will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to his family and the people of Iran. The Government of India has declared a one-day national mourning on 21 May as a mark of respect to His Excellency Dr. Sayyid Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and His Excellency Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who tragically passed away in a helicopter crash."

Mr. President, I would like to thank you for your very detailed briefing on the status of the programme of work. We have supported you in your efforts and we would like to thank you for the considerable effort that you have put into taking this initiative to find consensus on a programme of work. I think we broadly agree with your assessment of where this programme of work is currently at, and we hope that the succeeding presidency of Iraq will

take forward your initiative and bring us closer to consensus. Hopefully we will find consensus.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): At the outset, let me say that the Government and the people of Pakistan are deeply shocked and saddened by the tragic news of the martyrdom of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Sayyid Ebrahim Raisi, and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in a helicopter crash. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and to the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We stand in solidarity with them in this time of national tragedy. Pakistan observed a day of national mourning, when our flags were flown at half-mast. President Raisi and Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian were esteemed leaders and statesmen whose contributions to reinforcing Pakistan-Iran relations will always be remembered. I recall they visited Pakistan just last month. May their departed souls rest in eternal peace.

Mr. President, I would also like to acknowledge your tireless efforts in holding extensive consultations on the draft decision in a transparent manner. Your briefing today is also reflective of the same. You strove and did extensive work trying to build on the good work done by the Indonesian presidency as well.

We are grateful for your working paper, as contained in document CD/WP.655, outlining the dual-track approach that you adopted, as well as for your sharing of the outcome of your consultations and efforts regarding the draft decision. We believe that the time to present and introduce new proposals for the text was five months ago. Similarly, the moment to insist on old formulations which did not enjoy consensus has passed for this session. This week as we approach the end of the third presidency, we must focus our efforts on salvaging our commonalities and adopting a decision to establish subsidiary bodies.

While we may not have the benefit of the full session length available to the subsidiary bodies, we may still be able to undertake some useful substantive work. In view of this, while the draft decision presented by you may not fully satisfy the concerns of everyone, including my delegation, in the interest of constructive engagement and maximum flexibility, we stand ready to join consensus on it under your presidency. However, this flexibility is, of course, subject to reciprocity from others. We hope that all States members of the Conference will be able to demonstrate the same level of flexibility and constructive approach as shown by some delegations, including mine, in the negotiation process.

Mr. President, I would like to thank you and your team once again for your efforts on the draft decision.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ali Ahmad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. Ali Bahreini, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, we learned with great sadness and sorrow the news of the death of President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and their comrades. Iran and the free world have lost two prominent leaders who dedicated their lives to serving their country, worked diligently and faithfully to bring stability and prosperity to the people of Iran, and contributed with their sincere efforts to strengthening cooperation and solidarity with many countries of the world.

The Syrian Arab Republic shares the grief of our friends, the Iranian people. The Syrian Government has declared three days of official public mourning, and flags will be at half mast throughout the Syrian Arab Republic and in all embassies and diplomatic offices abroad during the mourning period.

Mr. Ambassador, please accept our heartfelt condolences to you, the members of the Permanent Mission, the Iranian people and the Iranian Government, and especially to the families of the victims. Our hearts are with all of you, and we are confident of your country's ability to overcome these difficult times and continue its pivotal role at the regional and international levels in promoting security and stability and supporting the just causes of peoples.

Mr. President, thank you for your oral briefing to the Conference on the latest updates to the draft decision on the work of the Conference on Disarmament in 2024. We also thank

you for working paper CD/WP.655, which you distributed yesterday to the member States of the Conference. We have read them carefully and commend the dual-track approach taken by the Iranian presidency in conducting the work of the Conference. We also highly appreciate your diligent efforts and the constructive and transparent consultations that you conducted with the aim of reaching a consensus on the draft decision.

My delegation expresses its support for the draft decision proposed by you and annexed to this working paper and is ready to approve it. My delegation believes that your proposed draft decision constitutes a compromise solution, which the Conference can agree on if there is flexibility and sincere political will on the part of all its members, with a view to commencing substantive work during the remainder of the current session of the Conference.

We do not believe that it is appropriate at this stage to submit proposals that take the discussions back to square one and do not reflect the spirit of consensus that the Conference presidency has worked to build.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Ms. de Souza e Silva (Brazil): The Government of Brazil learned the sad news of the passing away of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Sayyid Ebrahim Raisi, of Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and other Iranian officials as a result of a helicopter crash the day before yesterday. The Brazilian Government extends to the families of President Raisi, Foreign Minister Abdollahian and the other victims, and to the Iranian Government and people, its most sincere feelings of solidarity and sorrow for such irreparable losses.

Mr. President, we understand the difficult circumstances in which you find yourself as you chair the present session and we thank you for your effort and engagement.

Since the beginning of the year, Brazil has stated that an early decision on the programme of work would be positive. Now, some time has elapsed. Having said that, we are convinced that while we are here discussing a way forward for our programme of work, we are militating for continuity. Continuity means some additionality in regard to the past work of the Conference and some guidance for future work in 2025. Whatever we are able to decide, let it not be so full of conditionalities that it precludes the kicking off of our work. Brazil will support any freely reached consensus by our distinguished plenary.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Shen Jian (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, first of all, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, I would like to express our deep condolences for the deaths of President Raisi and Minister for Foreign Affairs Amir-Abdollahian and the other Iranians who were tragically killed in a helicopter accident. President Xi Jinping of China has sent a message of condolence to First Vice-President Mokhber of Iran, expressing our deep condolences on the death of President Raisi on behalf of the Chinese Government and the Chinese people. President Raisi and Minister for Foreign Affairs Amir-Abdollahian made important contributions to developing Chinese-Iranian relations and promoting regional friendly cooperation. They were good friends of the Chinese people. Their tragic deaths are a great loss to the Iranian people, and we feel deep regret at their passing. We have faith that the Iranian Government and people will have the strength to overcome this difficult time.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your presentation on the Conference's efforts on its programme of work. You and your team have always held broad consultations with all parties in an open, inclusive, transparent and respectful manner, have listened to the views of all parties in a balanced way and have worked hard to reach consensus. China deeply appreciates these efforts. On the basis of full consultation and communication with all parties, you developed a draft decision that was previously made available to all member States through the coordinators of the regional groups and was distributed yesterday as a formal working paper. As you pointed out in your working paper and in your statement just now, no delegation has objected, although not every member State is fully satisfied. While the Chinese delegation still has some concerns about certain formulations in the text, it wishes to express its support for the draft decision and hopes that all parties will show flexibility and constructiveness to reach consensus on it.

Mr. President, China has always advocated reaching this year's programme of work on the basis of the 2022 formula, precisely because this model reflects a delicate balance and may be the greatest common denominator acceptable to all parties, or not opposed by any of them, in the current complex international security situation. The programme of work is not an end in itself, but rather a concise decision that enables the Conference to conduct systematic and substantive work in subsidiary bodies, allowing for more systematic, professional and in-depth discussions among member States on the agenda items before it. That was the original purpose and value of adopting the relevant decisions and establishing the subsidiary bodies. During the discussions, there was the possibility of updating decisions. However, if new proposals failed to garner the support of all member States, it would be necessary to revert to the existing consensus rather than prolonging discussions on the programme of work with the continued introduction of language that complicated the text.

Mr. President, China supports strengthening the continuity of the work of the Conference on Disarmament, which is why China has always stressed the need to extend the decision reached on 8 March 2022 so as to reach a programme of work for this year and embark on substantive work as soon as possible. That would be the most important kind of continuity.

Of course, if all parties can reach consensus on a draft decision and aspire to submit it in some way next year, China is open to that. But at the same time we should ensure that practices and formulations are consistent with the rules of procedure of the Conference. Moreover, we cannot predict whether our colleagues will propose new ideas next year, just as some of our current colleagues are now coming up with new proposals to modify the consensus formula used in 2022. Therefore, China suggests that consideration be given to adopting a more flexible approach, such as by means of a presidential statement, so that a draft decision on which consensus may be reached this year can be passed on to the first President next year, for reference.

I should like to point out that continuity is not contingent on a few sentences in the draft decision. What is more important is to create the conditions and atmosphere conducive to the beginning of substantive work in the Conference, to respect the concerns of all parties and to demonstrate the necessary political will.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Ms. Paumier López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of the Government of Cuba, we convey our most heartfelt and sincere condolences on the passing of President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and the delegation accompanying them. We extend our condolences to the victims' families and friends, and Cuba offers its full support and solidarity to the Islamic Republic of Iran at this time of mourning.

Today, the President of the Republic of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, declared a period of national mourning. For two days, flags in Cuba and at all its embassies will be flown at half-mast in support of Iran at this time of grief. At the same time, we express our absolute confidence that the Islamic Republic of Iran will move forward and recover from this unfortunate and deeply sad event.

Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you and your team for your diligence and dedication in conducting inclusive and transparent consultations with all member States. We appreciate the enormous effort made to listen to and consider the opinions and concerns of each delegation, which is an essential requirement for the success of our collective work. The commitment of Iran to the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum and to its preservation has been evident from the beginning of its work. While ensuring thematic discussions on topics of great interest, its intention to move towards consensus on a working decision has been clear.

We welcome the approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran to continue consultations and build on the foundations laid by the Indian and Indonesian presidencies despite the time of year that we have got to. Its valiant efforts to build bridges between almost irreconcilable positions have not gone unnoticed and are palpable in the text of document CD/WP.655.

Mr. President, we believe that the decision contained in your working paper represents the lowest common denominator that we can currently reach, and we express our strong support for it. It is nowhere near what we would like, of course, but we note that it is a genuine compromise that incorporates a number of delegations' priorities and, at the same time, avoids the red lines that would make it impossible for us to adopt a decision by consensus. If we want a decision to be adopted quickly and to ensure that each subsidiary body holds at least two meetings, it is essential that we do not strive for perfection and that we find the political will to act. Our delegation will do its part if this decision is formally adopted.

Mr. President, we conclude by reiterating that you can continue to count on our unwavering support in the final moments of your presidency.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Hashim Mostafa (Iraq): (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, Mr. Ambassador, we understand your grief and your difficult personal situation in presiding over the Conference at this difficult time. However, we believe that your professionalism calls for you to continue with the meeting. It is with great sadness that we learned the news of the death of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Mr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and their companions during the unfortunate helicopter crash in northern Iran.

We extend our deepest condolences and sympathy to the brotherly people and Government of Iran. We express our solidarity with the brotherly Iranian people, the friendly Government and the officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We ask God to have mercy on the deceased and to grant their families and loved ones patience and solace.

After offering these condolences, I would like to say a few words regarding the work of the Conference. First of all, I would like to thank you for presiding over the work of this Conference at this time, as well as the previous Indian and Indonesian presidencies. It is clear to all that the work of the Conference is integrative, cumulative, multilateral and multi-presidential. We are talking about a six-party presidency for this year comprising the past presidencies, the upcoming presidency of Iraq, and the following two presidencies of Ireland and Israel.

The work is integrative and cumulative, so accomplishments accumulate. We are building on what was accomplished during the previous presidencies, and everyone is building on what was accomplished during past presidencies in previous years as well. Therefore, we believe it is very important to have a programme of work that is agreed upon by everyone, so as to continue the work of the Conference, recognizing the importance of the thematic discussions that take place during the Conference sessions. The proposals made by the current presidency, which are well supported by a number of countries and regional and geographical groups, are appreciated by Iraq, which will be next to hold the presidency.

We also appreciate the paper submitted by the French and United States missions. It is very important to ensure that we have a consensus in order to move forward with the work of the Conference. We will therefore make sure to respect and reconcile all proposals in order to reach a general consensus to move the Conference forward.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your kind words, sympathy and support. I wish you all success during your presidency of the Conference. Next on my list is the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. Storsve (United States of America): Mr. President, I join others in expressing my Government's condolences for the loss of life in your country in the helicopter crash on Sunday.

Turning to the Conference's programme of work, first, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for your fair reflection of the status of where we are right now and of the process that you have both observed and facilitated. My delegation has attended a number of informal meetings and we appreciate your personal efforts and those of your whole team in this regard. We have appreciated the efforts of this presidency to facilitate informal discussions on the decision on work from the outset.

From the beginning, Mr. President, your focus has been on bringing forward the work conducted under the Indian and Indonesian presidencies, with a commitment to making this effort, which is coming so late in the session, worth it. By “worth it”, I mean through making and promoting more continuity in the Conference’s work.

The presidency has expressed several times – as reinforced by cross-regional member statements in this plenary since March and reiterated again in the working paper that you circulated yesterday – that the goal of the Conference should be to apply whatever it agrees this year in 2024 also to our work in 2025, noting, of course, the need under the rules of procedure for a consensus decision at the start of next year to do so.

We support this approach to continuity that the Iranian presidency proposed because it would allow subsidiary bodies to be established and to meet at least a couple of times this year and then get to work immediately and maximize their work next year across all agenda items. It is also for this reason that we believe it is worth the effort to take a little more time to get this decision right. It has been our perception all along that most delegations shared this approach and shared our desire that any decision taken this year would be an improvement, however small, on what was agreed before, in order to send a positive signal about the Conference on Disarmament and its work.

We continue to support this way ahead and, in that spirit, last Friday we circulated, with France, a compilation of text proposals that we had made to the presidency as well as to a number of delegations to the Conference. Most of those proposals had unfolded in informal small groups which is a useful technique but over time one that leads to a sense of a loss of transparency, since the full plenary has never had an opportunity to react or edit or suggest alternatives. So it was not clear to us that everyone had seen all of these suggestions and we thought it was important to make them available. So we circulated that text on Friday as food for thought for this discussion and we hope that delegations will react to some of those proposals, which aim to improve the text in a few different ways.

First, we suggest reinserting a specific reference to continuity. I think in the text before us right now that word does not even appear. If there has been one theme this year most delegations have mentioned, including today – we have heard from Syria about not reinventing the wheel, from Pakistan about making the best use of our time to continue the work, from Brazil and also from Iraq just now – that theme has been the need for greater continuity in our work to avoid beginning each year at zero.

Second, we think that the reference to merely being aware of past work of the Conference should be strengthened by a single word, “of” instead of “in” the Conference on Disarmament.

Third, we note that one delegation proposed from the outset some language on legally binding instruments in paragraph 1 and that language had met with near consensus; we wonder why it was dropped from the text. The United States would have been happy to support that, given its importance to several regions and delegations, as many expressed on record earlier in this session.

And finally, and maybe most importantly, given what we have heard both today and throughout the year on continuity, we tried out some language in paragraph 7 that would state our common intent to apply this year’s decision to next year but not further and without prejudice to future decisions. We think paragraph 7 needs some adjustment to make this intent clear, as has been expressed by the current presidency and many delegations, though we can be flexible about precisely how to reflect this sentiment.

I will just conclude by noting that we did not make these proposals as an all-or-nothing approach. We put them out there again in a spirit of transparency and making sure that all of those who have not necessarily been at the informal meetings would have a chance to react to these proposals. Our delegation has not received any reactions directly yet and so we would welcome any discussion of those proposals today, so that everyone would have the same understanding.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Damazio (Nigeria): The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria commiserates with the Government and good people of the Islamic Republic of Iran over the tragic helicopter crash that led to the death of His Excellency Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and some other top Government officials, including Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, on 19 May 2024. Nigeria is deeply saddened by this tragic incident, which represents a huge loss not only to the Iranian people but to the world at large. Nigeria stands in solidarity with Iran in these trying times and extends heartfelt condolences to the families of the departed and the people of Iran.

Mr. President, my delegation commends you for the concise briefing on the work of the Conference while also being cognizant of the emotional difficulties for you given the current circumstances. We express profound gratitude to you and your team for all your hard work to reach consensus on a draft decision on the work of the Conference in an attempt to amplify the need for substantive progress in the Conference this year.

While we would like to place on record that this may not be the most ideal draft – as even you have rightly observed – my delegation offers its support in a spirit of flexibility and constructive dialogue with a view to commencing the substantive work of the Conference this year and in 2025.

And just to further state that my delegation would have loved to see the retention of the legally binding perspective that was introduced during the beginning of consultations on the draft, as just observed by the delegation of the United States. But, in the spirit of flexibility that I mentioned earlier, we would go along with the draft.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Omarov (Kazakhstan): At the beginning I would like to say that President Tokayev, on behalf of the people of Kazakhstan and his own behalf, would like to offer condolences to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the first Vice-President and the entire Iranian people in connection with the tragic loss of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, and the members of the Government delegation as a result of the helicopter crash. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan has also sent a telegram of condolences in connection with this tragic event to the high-ranking officials of Iran. I would like to quote a few words from the telegram: “They made a significant contribution to the strengthening of relations between Kazakhstan and Iran in the spirit of traditional friendship and mutual support. Their bright names will forever remain in our memory. At this difficult moment we express our sincere condolences to the friendly Iranian people and the families who have lost their loved ones.”

As regards the programme of work, Mr. President, thank you for your detailed explanation of the situation and the current state of play. Your working paper on a dual-track approach is very useful and we are carefully considering all these elements. We also thank the United States and France for their working paper, which we received yesterday.

As many have said today, this is not an ideal draft but, in a spirit of cooperation and flexibility, we can support it and work forward. At the same time, if we have the will to work further on some improvements, we can also accept that and work further with the next presidents this year and next year’s presidents.

On continuity, I would like to say that this Conference has been operating in continuity mode for two years now, since the Egyptian presidency, when we began to work on the 2022 programme of work, which we are still working on. So we are not starting from scratch, so to speak. And I hope that we will continue trying to achieve results on the programme of work. At the same time, as you said, we can work on useful thematic discussions as well. So this approach is welcomed by us and we are ready to work with you during this week and with the Iraqi presidency after that.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ju Yong Chol (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to express our deep and heartfelt condolences to the Government and people and bereaved families of the Islamic Republic of Iran upon receiving the shocking

news of the tragic accident. We are convinced that the Iranian Government and people will overcome the pain of this great loss and advance vigorously to build a strong and prosperous country.

Mr. President, my delegation would like to express its sincere appreciation for all the efforts made during your presidency to reach consensus on the work plan of the Conference, and we look forward to continuity of such constructive engagement under the next presidency.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Elghitany (Egypt): Mr. President, please accept my sincere condolences on the tragic crash that took place two days ago and allow me to convey my Government's condolences, as released by the Office of the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt:

(spoke in Arabic)

The Arab Republic of Egypt mourns with great sadness President Ebrahim Raisi of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Foreign Minister Mr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and their companions, who died on Sunday, 19 May 2024, following a tragic accident.

President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi extends his sincere condolences and sympathy to the brotherly Iranian people, praying to God Almighty to have mercy on the departed Iranian President and other deceased and to grant their families patience and solace, and expresses the solidarity of the Arab Republic of Egypt with the Iranian leadership and people at this time of great loss.

(spoke in English)

Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting in these tough times. We commend your professional approach to the presidency in allowing the Conference an opportunity to substantively engage on issues on its agenda while in parallel continuing the negotiations and the outreach in an attempt to reach a consensus programme of work. This is very important and we do believe that it is the duty of every single presidency to keep trying until the last minute to reach a programme of work. Programme of work attempts should never be declared over or dead at any moment during any session. It is a duty incumbent upon every single president to continue working on this.

Having said that, we will be flexible with regard to a draft that could reach consensus. However, there is a critical element that the delegation of Egypt would very much like to see present as well, which is the element of continuity. Continuity is critical for the credibility of the work of this Conference. Egypt has a very steadfast position of reaffirming the value of the role played by the Conference on Disarmament, but the value of the role played by the Conference has to be meaningful also for the larger process of discussions on disarmament within the disarmament machinery. And the minimum level of credibility that the Conference needs is to allow its work to continue, because we cannot speak about the role of the Conference and then scrap it on 31 December every year just to start working from scratch on 1 January, trying to reiterate or repeat the previous work that has been done, throwing away all the previous work with no mechanism to carry it over and build on it.

A step-by-step and incremental approach is a very valuable tool of diplomacy in those moments when we cannot achieve large leaps forward. But while there is a larger exercise going on across the whole international multilateral system in the form of the forthcoming Summit of the Future at the United Nations, with all that that involves for the disarmament machinery, we cannot afford to remain here at the Conference on Disarmament standing still, running on the spot.

We need to send a signal that this body can still contribute to the disarmament machinery. It is because of this and because of how we believe in the very viable and critical role that the Conference on Disarmament is able to play and should be playing – and we reflect on this in many, many draft resolutions in the General Assembly – that we need to allow for a structural mechanism that could carry over the Conference's previous work and its achievements – even if they are minimal, they could be one step forward.

Let us imagine the situation in 2024 if we had been able to build on the reports that were successfully adopted under the different subsidiary bodies in 2022. Certainly, we would

at least have been able to proceed forward in a more efficient, credible and positive manner. But today in 2024, we are simply trying to get back to where we were in 2022. We believe this is unfair. We have a moral responsibility and an ethical responsibility to ensure the credibility of the work of this body and to send a signal to the wider disarmament machinery architecture and the international multilateral regime about the very important role of the Conference. We need to assure a minimum level of continuity. We are not here trying to agree on a certain substantive topic as such, but we do say we are very serious about our work. Even if we are unable to proceed on the fast track or agree on big things or the big picture, we can build incrementally on our small successes in the hope that we will get to the larger picture one day.

We do not believe that if we just reduced our appetite for consensus to the minimum level of consensus, in the absence of continuity, we would be sending any serious signal about our work. And I am frankly very concerned that this would open the door for some voices who really question the role and the viability of the Conference on Disarmament, which is something that Egypt strongly speaks out against because we believe the Conference has played a critical role in the toughest of times in the past and it will and must continue to play that role. It is the legitimate platform for negotiations on legally binding instruments within the disarmament machinery. But to be able to say this, we need to send a signal that will allow it to build on its successful reports. What would be the value of any work we do if this work becomes obsolete on 31 December every year?

We very much value the rationale presented first by you, Mr. President, and then by our colleagues from many delegations, including the delegations of the United States, France, Iraq and Brazil, who clearly share this view. It is our historic moral responsibility to enable this body to discharge its mandate. We stress that continuity is not a luxury. It should never be an element for disagreement. It is just a reflection of the good faith in which we approach negotiations within this body. I hope that is clear.

Aside from this, we will proceed with the draft as long as it is referring to continuity in a sense that could enable us to carry over the minimum of our work to the following session. We do not want to be here in 2025, Mr. President, starting from scratch. It is a collective responsibility of both the member States of the Conference and the presidencies to take even a small step forward every year. But this recycling approach, where we are going in circles, I do not think would be the right signal at a very critical moment; this year it is not business as usual. We will have a very important summit in September. It will reshape for many years to come our approach to many critical issues across the three pillars of the whole multilateral system, including the peace and security pillar, at the core of which lies disarmament, where the Conference should be leading and spearheading strategically the collective effort of the States who have been involved in trying to achieve some progress on its agenda.

Out of sincerity I thought of sharing all of this with you at this moment. We will support the consensus, we will never stop it, but we really look forward to having an element of continuity reflected in the draft.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Ms. Crabtree (Türkiye): Mr. President, we extend our deepest condolences to you, to the Government and to the people of our neighbour Iran, on the demise of President Raisi, Foreign Minister Abdollahian, their accompanying delegation and the helicopter crew.

Mr. President, we welcome your efforts to help us adopt a consensus-based programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. As you emphasized, it is important to continue striving to achieve this objective. With this understanding, we will keep supporting your efforts to that end.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, my delegation would also like to speak on the subject of today's meeting.

Our delegation considers that the Iranian presidency, like the previous presidency, has done a huge amount work aimed at reaching consensus on a decision on the organization of the work at this session of the Conference on Disarmament. It is important to note that the

Iranian presidency did not start this work from scratch, but that it was based on the groundwork already done by the Indian and Indonesian presidencies. This in itself reflects the principle of consistency and continuity which, as many here have emphasized, is important to the Conference's work.

Furthermore, we consider that the informal six-plus-two format, of the group of the six Presidents of the 2024 session, together with the last President of the 2023 session and the first of the 2025 session, is also a means of ensuring continuity and consistency in the Conference's work. We would like to underscore the importance of this format and would like to emphasize our satisfaction that, despite different political approaches and political circumstances, this format continues to work and contributes to efforts to reach consensus on the programme of work.

Now, with direct reference to the document which you have submitted: first of all, we would like to thank you for your objective review of the status of the efforts that have been made to agree on a decision on organization of our work. A really epic task has been accomplished. I was trying to remember when else, in which previous session in the last five or six years, such work has been performed by presidencies. It seems to me that this year's work is of a truly unprecedented nature.

As a result of this work, understandings and compromises have been reached on the text of the possible decision that you have presented. As you rightly emphasized, this document is neither optimal nor ideal. And it probably does not satisfy the demands that delegations, in particular our delegation, have. Nonetheless, we are willing to show flexibility and if this document were to be presented for approval at today's meeting, or at a subsequent meeting, we would join the consensus. The rationale for our position is that this document was, after all, the result of numerous bilateral and multilateral consultations and, in fact, is the maximum possible outcome that can be achieved now, at this stage, under the circumstances in which the Conference has to work at this session.

The statements made by many delegations today are encouraging. And I would note that the Russian delegation has already stated its position on the idea that our possible decision on the programme of work must demonstrate some progress in the activities of the Conference, as well as delegations' focus on the task of resuming the full-scale work of the Conference and, in particular, on resuming negotiations on the agenda items.

We have heard a number of statements in support of the document that you have presented. We are pleased to note that no objections to your proposal have been raised so far. And I emphasize again that we would vote in favour of this document if it were presented for approval today. And I would emphasize that we are ready to continue working on it, if delegations deem it necessary to continue such work.

We would like to thank the delegations of France and the United States of America for the working paper which they have submitted, which is a compilation of the proposals and views that have been put forward since the beginning of the Conference. It is not a perfect document either, as it does not reflect all the suggestions that have been made. But this in no way reduces the value of this document as a reference point for use in our subsequent work. Moreover, we think that some of the suggestions that are reflected in the American-French document deserve consideration and could be used to improve the text that you have presented.

However, we have some doubts as to whether we should once again start a whole round of discussions on the draft decision because, I repeat, the text that you have presented is already the outcome of serious, deep, comprehensive discussions, during which many of the proposals reflected in the American-French document were already considered.

Nevertheless, I reiterate that we are ready to continue working on the draft decision with your presidency and your successors, the representatives of Iraq, in order to lay the groundwork for drafting a programme of work in time for our next session.

I would like to refer separately to the idea of consistency and continuity in the work of the Conference. Our delegation considers that this is an important issue, especially if we look at it through the prism of a possible resumption of negotiations in the Conference.

Indeed, if the Conference decides to resume negotiations on any agenda item, it would be counterproductive at the end of a regular session, this one or the next, to begin again at zero on decisions to commence negotiations and start the discussion of the programme of work from scratch.

In this context, we think that the issue of consistency and continuity deserves the closest attention, and we stand ready, together with other delegations, to discuss it thoroughly and as constructively as possible.

Once again, I observe that delegations are unanimous in their intentions, consensus and readiness to reach middle ground on the programme of work.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Ms. Saran (South Africa): Mr. President, on behalf of the Government and people of South Africa, I take this opportunity to express our sincere condolences to you and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the tragic passing of His Excellency President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian and their entourage. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the bereaved. We pray also for your strength in this period of mourning and my country stands in solidarity with the people of Iran.

Mr. President, thank you for the update on the status of developments regarding the decision on the programme of work. We also express our appreciation for the working paper contained in document CD/WP.655 that was circulated to the membership yesterday. My delegation appreciates the work that you have put in as well as the dual-track approach that you have adopted during your tenure.

With regard to the decision on a programme of work, we do hope that the Conference will be able to reach a consensus that will allow for a decision for it to commence its substantive work, as it is still the single multilateral negotiating forum of the international community.

My delegation further expresses its support to you and would like to thank you for all the work that you have done during your tenure as President of the Conference.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Ms. Yoon Seongmee (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, first of all, I would like to add my voice to those expressing sincere condolences for the tragic loss of the late Iranian President and others last Sunday.

On the working paper before us, Mr. President, I would like to thank you and all delegations that have been working tirelessly to finalize our programme of work, building on the initiatives of Ambassador Ray and Ambassador Ruddyard. I still very much concur with your view, communicated on the first day of your presidency, that we have to look at the issue of the programme of work from a longer perspective and to continue working on it in the context of continuity. I also share the view that the programme of work should be drafted and finalized in a way that will lead to a tangible contribution to the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament. In this context, my delegation appreciates the added proposal in paragraph 5 of the President's draft. At the same time, we deem it proper and useful to underscore in paragraph 7 that the Conference will carry forward the programme of work to our 2025 session, if agreed, of course.

Meanwhile, my delegation understands that the new addition to preambular paragraph 5 is an attempt at compromise, but we cannot but express our belief that the word "efforts", as in "while being aware of previous efforts in the CD", is inadequate here. It is, in fact, not only the efforts but the past work of the Conference that should clearly be recognized and that should serve as the basis on which to build our further work. So we would suggest either replacing the word "efforts" with "work" or use them both.

Finally, we would prefer to highlight in paragraph 1 that the purpose of the subsidiary bodies which are to be created again is to move forward on our negotiating mandate rather than to serve simply as another deliberative body, but we are ready to be flexible on this point. We also count on the constructive flexibility of all members of the Conference to move us forward.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Fetz (Canada): Mr. President, we express our sympathies to the Iranian people at this difficult time.

We thank you, Mr. President, your delegation and previous presidencies for your efforts on the programme of work. We appreciate the circulation of your working paper and that of France and the United States for a transparent discussion in this plenary meeting. We looked at the two working papers in front of us and unfortunately both of them are rather weak and far from fulfilling the Conference's mandate. This is not your responsibility, Mr. President, but the continued inability of the membership as a whole to master the political will to agree on a serious programme of work.

In the absence of a willingness of members of the Conference on Disarmament to establish clear negotiation mandates for subsidiary bodies, we support limiting procedural discussions and moving to creating subsidiary bodies tasked with addressing the general agenda items of the Conference.

Canada agreed to a similar proposal in 2022, not because it was a strong programme of work but precisely because it was designed to reduce procedural discussions and get us to a substantive discussion in subsidiary bodies. The inadequate outcome of the work of subsidiary bodies in 2022, which was not recognized in the final report of the Conference that year, demonstrated that the approach of 2022 was not sufficient. The Conference should do better.

This year we are even worse off than in 2022 because we have not succeeded in establishing subsidiary bodies in a timely manner, despite the efforts of the presidencies to date. With all the time that has passed, in our view, establishing subsidiary bodies this year only makes sense if the work can continue next year. Delegations would not have enough time to dive into the substance during the time remaining. After all, further procedural decisions including agreement on facilitators and scheduling subsidiary bodies remain outstanding.

When comparing the two papers, our delegation prefers the one from France and the United States, as it puts more emphasis on continuity and starting negotiations. For us, it is difficult to understand why States – despite expressing repeatedly their support for this institution, its negotiating mandate and its work – would not want to support the amendments proposed in that paper.

I close with emphasizing, like many other delegations, that the most valuable contribution we can make at this late stage this year is to agree on the principle of continuity. We should set the stage for setting up subsidiary bodies early next year without starting from scratch, and our delegation supports making that very clear in any text that we adopt.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of France.

Ms. Petit (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, my country wishes to extend its condolences to the Islamic Republic of Iran following the death of President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and the persons who were accompanying them. Our thoughts are also with the families of the victims of the accident.

Mr. President, I would like to thank you for the progress report concerning our discussions on the programme of work for the Conference. As you know, France supports the resumption of the substantive work of the Conference so that negotiations on relevant instruments and the most pressing subjects can recommence. In this context, we have advocated for an enhancement of the mandate of the Conference's subsidiary bodies so that the discussions which took place in 2022 and 2018 and the work that preceded them may be taken into account. I would like to thank the Indian and Indonesian presidencies for their hard work with a view to taking on board the requests expressed by all delegations and ensuring that we have a sufficiently robust text to guide our work.

We have followed the work taken on under your presidency in the same spirit. In this respect, we regret that formal discussions could not be held with all the interested parties in an attempt to reach agreement on a text that would be deemed suitable by all. France has therefore endeavoured to pursue bilateral contacts with as many delegations as possible in

order to identify aspects of the text that could be improved. To this end, together with the United States, last week we submitted new compromise proposals aimed at improving the text on the three most debated points: firstly, the reference to negotiations and legally binding instruments; secondly, taking into account the past work of the Conference on Disarmament; and, thirdly, the continuity of our work, including with a view to the next session in 2025.

Indeed, given the advanced stage of this session, there would be good reason to continue our discussions in 2025 on the basis of the programme of work adopted in 2024, as many delegations have pointed out. We have drawn up these proposed amendments taking into account the positions adopted by all the delegations and the problematic points that have been brought to our attention. I should point out that these amendments have already been considerably attenuated, on our own initiative, in order to take account of the objections systematically raised by one delegation. We have found it hard to understand those objections, as it would seem difficult to oppose these three aspects – aspects that are essential to the resumption of the work of the Conference on Disarmament. As the aim of our work is to negotiate legally binding instruments, it is important that the Conference should not wipe the slate clean with each passing year. Otherwise, there is no real possibility of pursuing negotiations. There has to be some continuity to our efforts.

To better understand these objections, we took the initiative of consulting the delegation concerned, as no consultation with all the interested delegations has been organized to date, despite our requests. Therefore, we are now awaiting the delegation's explanation of its position on the amendments that we have put forward, especially as there has been very strong support for them this morning, particularly as regards the continuity of the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Numerous delegations, including those of Egypt, Brazil, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea, have just sent a strong message to this effect. Consequently, we very much hope that discussions will continue on a programme of work that will actually enable us to move forward, including, as appropriate, during the forthcoming presidency of Iraq. We therefore encourage the members of this Conference to adopt this constructive approach.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Ms. Ichikawa (Japan): Mr. President, like previous speakers, let me start by expressing our deepest condolences on the passing of President Raisi, Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian and others who passed away. Prime Minister Kishida and Foreign Minister Kamikawa both sent their messages expressing their deepest condolences and offering their sincere prayers.

I would like to thank you for briefing the Conference and appreciate your efforts and those of your team, as well as those of the previous presidencies, in your efforts to try to find consensus on the programme of work. I would also like to thank the delegations of the United States and France for circulating their proposal.

Regarding the draft decision on the work of the Conference on Disarmament, we strongly support establishing subsidiary bodies to conduct in-depth discussions in a structured manner and report back to the plenary in order to advance the work of the Conference. At the same time, we are already approaching the end of the third presidency of this year. So if we are going to establish the subsidiary bodies at this juncture, there will be very little time left for their substantive work this year. Therefore, if we are going to adopt a decision at this time of the year, or later, on the work of the Conference, we need to make sure that we can carry the work we start this year over to next year.

Since the beginning of this year, Japan has been strongly stressing the importance of continuity. But now the continuity is becoming even more important, as already stressed by many delegations before me. This is, of course, without prejudice to the rules of procedure of this Conference. However, we need clear assurances that we will not be restarting from scratch, from zero, next year in our discussions on the programme of work, but instead we will be able to adopt the same formula on the work of the Conference as this year, without new negotiations at the beginning of next year. Also, the subsidiary bodies, if we can create them this year, will need to continue their work into next year if they are to engage in substantive meaningful work.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Göbel (Germany): First, I would like to express my condolences on the tragic helicopter accident in Iran causing the death of the President and the Foreign Minister of Iran and the people accompanying them.

Mr. President, I would like to join others in thanking you for your intensive efforts to reach a consensus on a decision on the work of the Conference and also on the paper outlining your approach and the state of play you presented to us this morning. As mentioned multiple times, the German delegation remains flexible in its approach to the ongoing discussions on the programme of work. We have carefully considered the draft that you presented to us and the various perspectives presented by all delegations on this matter. Even though we would prefer stronger language on continuity, as many others have also said this morning, the primary objective of my delegation is not a perfect draft, not the perfect language.

Our priority from the very beginning has been to agree on a text that would allow us, or should I say would have allowed us, to begin our work quickly and that means at the beginning of the session, at the beginning of this year. I understand this is no longer possible now. We are already approaching the end of the third presidency, and a decision on the work of the Conference at this point in the year, with only a few meetings remaining, will only have very limited value for the Conference's work. Instead, we believe, as many others have also said this morning, that the primary value of agreeing on a decision on the work of the Conference at this stage lies in reaching an agreement that will ensure the swift adoption of this decision in January 2025.

My delegation therefore welcomes the amendments put forward by France and the United States in this regard with a view to strongly reaffirming this perspective. In this regard, we are also open to the proposal just put forward by the Chinese delegation. It is agreeing on an approach that has already taken the form of a presidential statement during this session.

Mr. President, continuity is key and if all delegations can come to a mutual understanding on this matter, Germany will be prepared to agree on the proposed text or on any amended text as long as there is a shared understanding that we will start our work on this basis next year.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Pytalev (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, please allow me first of all to express my deepest sympathy on the tragic death of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and the persons accompanying them.

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, has sent condolences to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ali Khamenei, with regard to the tragedy. The news of what happened was received with deep sorrow in Belarus. On behalf of the Belarusian people and in a personal capacity, the President extended heartfelt condolences and words of support to the bereaved families, close friends and the entire Iranian people.

I thank the President most sincerely for his efforts to organize the work of the Conference on Disarmament, especially at this difficult time. Belarus supports the efforts to find a compromise in the current situation and also attaches great importance to the principle of continuity. We hope that, if all participants in this forum show some flexibility, it will be possible to agree on its programme of work and begin substantive, constructive work. Belarus is ready to be flexible in this regard.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Martínez Ruiz (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I would like to convey the condolences of the Government of Mexico to the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, including, of course, all the staff of its Permanent Mission here in Geneva, on the death of President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and their companions in the unfortunate events at the weekend.

Second, we thank you, Ambassador Ali Bahreini, for the report that you have presented to us on the efforts made by the Iranian delegation during its presidency of the

Conference on Disarmament, both in organizing thematic discussions and in continuing the negotiations to decide on a programme of work. Now that several delegations have given their general views on the organization of the Conference's work, my delegation would like to share some thoughts.

Obviously, as we are without an agreed programme of work halfway through the 2024 session of the Conference on Disarmament, we believe it is unrealistic to expect to have subsidiary bodies operational during the current session. While my delegation recognizes the desire to do so and the fact that it may be constructive to consider how to provide certainty and expedite the start of substantive work next year, for Mexico it is important to acknowledge that the sessions of the Conference on Disarmament are annual.

For my delegation, continuation or continuity will be assured by incremental substantive progress in its work and not by the mere repetition of the same procedural blueprints year after year, whether or not they have proved effective. Naturally, we are concerned that, in the face of the complex international climate and the growing consensus in the community on the urgency of moving towards nuclear disarmament and addressing other complex problems, be it the role that countries have assigned to new domains such as outer space or new challenges such as those presented by emerging technologies, we are continuing to work on draft decisions on a programme of work that insist on discussion frameworks that experience has shown do not bring us any closer to fulfilling the negotiating mandate of the Conference on Disarmament.

We note that the various drafts submitted follow the historical trend of including mandates with conditional language to ensure that there is no understanding of how to start any negotiation. They also fail to address the shortcomings of the subsidiary bodies established since 2018: the lack of a clear focus for their work, the failure to incorporate the past work of the Conference on Disarmament, the insistence on an unjustifiable informal format of work and reports that are barely more than mere meeting summaries.

For this reason, the Mexican delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal in his New Agenda for Peace to work on reforming the disarmament machinery.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Hill (Australia): At the outset, let me express condolences to the families of all those affected by the helicopter accident over the weekend.

Let me thank you, President, for the briefing today and for your working paper on your efforts to produce a programme of work. This, of course, builds on the extensive efforts of previous presidencies, those of India and Indonesia, and my delegation would like to place on record our thanks to all presidencies for their efforts in this regard. We would also like to thank the United States and France for their working paper.

We think it is very important at this juncture to have the compilation of proposals made during this year in front of us. From a transparency perspective, my delegation welcomes this opportunity to have a discussion in this plenary format on these proposals and on the draft that you have tabled. We think it is very important for us all to understand where objections have been made to certain proposals and what the basis for those objections is. In this regard, like so many before us today, my delegation wishes to highlight the importance that we place on the continuity of the work of the Conference. This is something that my delegation and many delegations have raised during the discussions on the programme of work this year.

Indeed, the focus on the aspect of the continuity of our work has been a very notable aspect of our programme of work discussions this year. And useful language has been proposed, in particular language that was put forward for inclusion in paragraph 7, which is highlighted in the United States-French paper, which garnered a lot of support, including from my delegation. But we see that this language did not make it into the latest draft. And we just wanted to take this opportunity to echo a point that many have made, that the programme of work negotiations this year have really lasted well into the session.

What we need is to see the fruit of all that work borne out next year as well. We can send a really clear signal about our collective intent in that regard by including language to that effect in the programme of work. As the representative of Egypt said earlier, what we

are looking for is a structural mechanism that would send that signal about our intent to carry our work forward.

So we really hope, President, that the will of so many of the delegations that have spoken today on the point of continuity can be reflected in the draft programme of work.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Mr. Horna Chicchón (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Peru is saddened by the death of President Raisi, his Foreign Minister and the other members of his entourage in the fatal accident at the weekend and expresses its heartfelt condolences to the Iranian Government and people.

With regard to the working paper presented by you based on the valuable progress made by the previous presidencies of Indonesia and India, my delegation thanks you for your efforts to achieve consensus on the draft decision on the programme of work. In this regard, we hope that the apparent convergence we have heard today will continue and that this Conference, with the political will of its member States, will be able to adopt such a decision in accordance with its rules of procedure soon, even during the Iraqi presidency.

My delegation would now like to turn to the paper submitted by the United States and France, which we welcome. My delegation received this proposal with particular interest and believes that it contains ways of renewing the programme of work previously agreed upon by the Conference, rightly emphasizing the idea of continuity in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We therefore believe that it should be given due consideration by the Conference.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. In den Bosch (Netherlands): The Netherlands expresses its condolences to the families of the Iranian President, Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and other members of their delegation and crew who died in the helicopter crash at the weekend.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, but also the Indian and Indonesian presidencies, for facilitating the reaching of consensus on the programme of work or, to be more precise, the decision on the programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament in 2024. I would also like to thank the delegations of France and the United States for circulating their working paper. For my delegation, indeed, this working paper addresses three important issues: the issue of negotiating in the Conference; the issue of building on and recognizing previous work done in the Conference; and the issue of continuity. A lot has already been said on continuity and I would like to align myself with the remarks made by the delegations of Canada, Germany and Australia in this respect. We think that paragraph 7 in the working paper proposed by France and the United States will be an excellent way forward.

It is a well-known position of my delegation that we have an interpretation of the rules of procedure whereby at the beginning of the year we should reach consensus on a working programme. The further we are into the year, the less the fruits we will be able to pick from the work we do in subsidiary bodies. If we achieve consensus on the decision later in the year, it is of the utmost importance that we should be able to carry forward this mandate to next year, and the same goes for the subsidiary bodies and their coordinators.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Sánchez de Lerín García-Ovies (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Like the other delegations, I would like to begin by expressing the condolences of the Spanish Government and the Spanish people for the death of the President, the Minister and the delegates accompanying them. I also wish to extend our condolences to their families and all of Iranian society.

Regarding the issue at hand on the programme of work, Spain supports efforts to give continuity to the negotiation and to facilitate the work at the next session in 2025. It therefore advocates a flexible interpretation of the rules of procedure that will allow us to introduce specific language in this regard based on the proposals already received, such as the proposal by France and the United States for a seventh operative paragraph. Any steps that we can take this year to make our work easier for next year will only be to the benefit of us all.

Our goal is still to move towards treaty negotiations. To this end, we must at some point have a substantive session on priorities and mandates to be able finally to establish a negotiating process that gives meaning to the Conference's core mandate.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Díaz Mendoza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much, Mr. President. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela expresses its deep dismay at the terrible accident that occurred on 19 May involving the helicopter carrying the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, together with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and other dignitaries and crew members. On behalf of Ambassador Alexander Yánez Deleuze, Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we warmly greet our colleagues from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The highest authorities of our country have also expressed their deepest condolences, as well as their most heartfelt words of comfort and support following these great losses. Our country recalls and reiterates its fraternal support for the Iranian people and Government at such a difficult time and hopes that the investigations carried out by the relevant authorities will promptly establish the origin and causes of this sad event.

With regard to the programme of work, the already existing asymmetry between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States constitutes a clear demonstration of the strategic vulnerability of the countries of the global South in the current security context. Despite decades of stalemate, the Conference on Disarmament remains the single multilateral forum with a mandate to negotiate disarmament and arms control treaties. We therefore emphasize the need to maintain the commitment to negotiate legally binding agreements on the critical items of the agenda. This underscores that the Conference should not be limited to being a forum for discussion and that it should move past lengthy deliberations and towards meaningful outcomes.

It is therefore regrettable that the member States of the Conference have still not reached consensus on a decision to resume substantive work in 2024 in line with the mandate contained in the resolution of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In this context, the Venezuelan delegation continues to welcome with great anticipation the strategic vision proposed by the Iranian presidency to continue consultations on the programme of work this cycle. It demonstrates a practical understanding of the latent opportunities of the Conference.

The call for consultations advanced by the Iranian presidency to forge a consensus on the programme of work for this period remains a critical and timely step, as there is less and less time left for achieving anything tangible. We stress that we must act quickly to support the President's proposal on the programme of work, which we consider to be a good basis for our work and the lowest common denominator.

The President: I would like to thank all of you for your kind words of sympathy following the tragic deaths of Sayyid Ebrahim Raisi, the President of my country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and of Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and other Iranian officials.

It gives us confidence to know that whatever we have accomplished so far has been a step forward. We have made some progress and we are getting incrementally closer to the development of a programme of work for the Conference. On behalf of the whole Conference, I would like to express our full support to the next President of the Conference, the Ambassador of Iraq, wishing him all success in continuing the work done so far and in leading it to the final destination.

Our next plenary will be this Thursday, 23 May, at 10.00 a.m. The secretariat will circulate the concept note very soon and will be in touch to communicate the logistics.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.