
Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and fifty-fifth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 27 March 2018 at 10.10 a.m.

President: Ms. Sabrina Dallafior (Switzerland)



The President: I call to order the 1455th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Distinguished colleagues, last week I referred to the efforts of my predecessors, Ambassador Aryasinha of Sri Lanka, who successfully guided us towards the adoption of the decision establishing the five subsidiary bodies, and Ambassador Bard, who helped us to identify five coordinators to lead the different subsidiary bodies with full respect for the principle of equitable regional representation. At that meeting, I also indicated that my first priority would be to consult broadly with a view to reconciling outstanding differences in the implementation of the decision contained in document CD/2119 and that I would spare no effort to this effect.

Over the past week I have therefore held numerous consultations with a view to bridging outstanding differences. These consultations have been characterized by constructive engagement and a willingness to collectively find a solution. The draft decision contained in document CD/WP.607, which was circulated yesterday, is the result of these consultations. It represents a compromise between different viewpoints and seeks to address all considerations. It is my hope that we will be in a position to take action on this draft decision during this plenary session.

The decision is composed of two parts. The first part of the decision contains all the necessary provisions towards the appointment of the coordinators of the five subsidiary bodies, including the titles of these bodies. The second part of the decision takes the form of a timetable, as an annex to the decision. The timetable has been drawn up with a number of considerations in mind, including to provide clarity to delegations. I hope that delegations will find it useful in their preparations.

Let me also highlight the following points regarding the timetable. All the subsidiary bodies have been allocated an equal amount of time, as required in document CD/2119, and will hold seven sessions each. All the subsidiary bodies will follow the same work pattern. They will all start with an initial segment made up of two sessions held in the same week. A few weeks later, each subsidiary body will hold its main segment, comprised of four sessions. The main segment of each subsidiary body is always held in the same week, to make it easier for experts coming from their countries to participate. Each subsidiary body will conclude its work by holding an individual wrap-up session in August to address matters linked to reporting. Let me also underline that a number of constraints had to be taken into account in drawing up the timetable. The time period available is limited and cannot be extended. The availability of coordinators had also to be factored in. Finally, we have sought to avoid collisions with other official meetings insofar as practical. This is why, for instance, the subsidiary bodies will not meet during the meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention experts, but that is not always possible for all meetings.

I understand that the timetable will not meet all expectations, but I beg for your understanding and indulgence. Drawing up the timetable has proved fairly, not to say very, complex. In this regard, and before proceeding further, I need to inform you of technical changes in the annexed timetable made since the draft decision was circulated yesterday morning. The changes were inserted to reflect two official United Nations holidays, on 15 June and 21 August in observance of Eid Al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, respectively.

Consequently, the meeting of subsidiary body 4 planned for 15 June 2018, morning and afternoon, has been moved to the afternoons of 11 June and 14 June. The meeting of subsidiary body 3 planned for the afternoon of 21 August has been moved to the morning of 24 August and finally there is one last amendment that still needs to be made. The last meeting of subsidiary body 1, which is currently planned for the afternoon of 20 August will need to be moved to the morning of 23 August. Please note that the document that is currently on your tables with the barcode is the official document for approval. It already contains the first two technical amendments that I have just mentioned and has to be considered with the oral amendment just made concerning moving one meeting of subsidiary body 1 from the afternoon of 20 August to the morning of 23 August.

After this explanation, we will move to take action on the draft decision but, before tabling the draft decision for adoption, I would like to ask whether any delegation wants to take the floor. That does not seem to be the case. So distinguished colleagues, may I take it that the Conference wishes to adopt the draft decision contained in document CD/WP.607

on the appointment of the coordinators for the subsidiary bodies established pursuant to the decision contained in document CD/2119, together with its annex, with the oral amendments made?

It was so decided.

The President: Distinguished colleagues, please allow me to congratulate you all and the Conference for taking another step in the right direction of bringing the Conference on Disarmament back to substantive work. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the distinguished delegate of the Russian delegation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, distinguished colleagues, first of all I would like to congratulate us all on the adoption of this important decision. We note the sustained efforts of the Ambassador of Switzerland and her colleagues, who have greatly facilitated the finding of a compromise. We are especially grateful to those delegations who demonstrated willingness and wisdom and made every effort to achieve mutually acceptable solutions. The decision adopted today is a shared success, highlighting that joint efforts can solve the complex problems facing the Conference today.

Now, when the organizational details have been fine-tuned, the parties to the Conference can begin their substantive work. The Russian delegation intends to take a constructive approach and is prepared to cooperate with the coordinators of all five subsidiary bodies in order to achieve tangible results. We expect that, in parallel with the thematic discussions, the Swiss presidency will continue the determined search for the best possible means of establishing a balanced programme of work for the Conference, taking previous experience into consideration.

Recognizing the special role of the presidency in this process, as set out in the rules of procedure, we would like to stress that agreement on a programme of work is the common priority for us all, and requires the participation of all parties to the Conference.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative from the Russian Federation for the statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Madam President, let me congratulate you, and the Conference on Disarmament as a whole, on this decision. Thanks to the hard work of you and your team in taking forward the decision contained in document CD/2119, we have been able to agree today on how the subsidiary bodies will be composed. I would also like to extend my gratitude to your predecessors as Chair of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Bard of Sweden and Ambassador Aryasinha of Sri Lanka. Last but not least, I would like to thank all the colleagues in the Conference on Disarmament for their efforts and the trust they have placed in me and the other coordinators to allow us to take our work further.

With respect to subsidiary body 2, let me at this stage make a few remarks in terms of its preparation. Firstly, it is my intention, on the basis of today's decision and the decision contained in document CD/2119, to send you a letter including a schedule setting out in more detail how we will proceed with our work. In that respect, I would like to underline the following: five meetings of the subsidiary body will be dedicated to the issue of banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. One meeting of the subsidiary body will be dedicated to matters other than banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, and the last meeting will be a wrap-up and a concluding session.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of the Netherlands and thank you for the statement and the kind words addressed to the presidencies. I now give the floor to the representative of China, to be followed by the representative of Germany.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Madam President, since assuming the presidency you have conducted many rounds of multilateral and bilateral consultations, demonstrating your rich experience in diplomacy and your meticulous and patient approach to your work. You have, with an open mind, heard out the various constructive views put

forward, including by China, and, in the space of just a week, you have promoted the formation of a consensus by all parties on the appointment of coordinators for the subsidiary bodies. On this point, the Chinese delegation would like to express its admiration for your professionalism and tireless efforts and to congratulate you on the adoption of this decision today by the plenary.

Madam President, the decision that has just been adopted, its annex and the statements made by the coordinators will serve as the basis for the Conference to now turn to substantive discussions. We believe that this package solution addresses the key concerns of all the parties quite well. It serves as a basis for concrete work by all the subsidiary bodies and is the result of the joint efforts of all parties to reach mutual understanding. Any way of proceeding that deviates from this package would do a disservice to the efforts made by all parties to bridge differences of opinions and to make a positive contribution to the spirit of cooperation and mutual trust and could block progress towards discussions by the subsidiary bodies.

The Chinese delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation of the contributions made by Ambassador Aryasinha of Sri Lanka and by your predecessor, Ambassador Bard of Sweden. In past years, Ambassador Aryasinha has played an important leadership role in the Conference's disarmament efforts in mechanisms such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and has established a deep friendship with the Chinese delegation. We would like once again to express our deep admiration for his efforts to advance the cause of international disarmament and his contribution to that cause. It is with great sorrow that we see him about to leave his post, and we wish him even greater success in his subsequent endeavours. Now, with the adoption of this decision, it is the right time for us to feel satisfaction and to celebrate. I would not want the moment to be ruined with boring political scuffles.

Thank you Madam President.

The President: I thank the distinguished delegate from China for his statement and the kind words addressed to the presidencies. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Germany.

Mr. Pilz (Germany): Madam President, let me at the outset also congratulate you on the adoption of the decision. I think this has been a long uphill battle and the success which we have achieved today would not have been possible without the dedicated work of your predecessors, Ambassador Bard of Sweden and Ambassador Aryasinha of Sri Lanka. And last but not least, it is the result of the positive will of all delegations assembled in this room to compromise in a constructive spirit.

For Germany, it is a great honour that we have been tasked by the Conference on Disarmament with assuming the function of coordinator of the subsidiary body on agenda item 4, effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons (negative security assurances). We will come up with a more detailed structure of the discussions that we envisage holding in due course and some additional preparatory papers which will enable all delegations to participate actively and constructively in this discussion.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Germany for his statement and his kind words addressed to the presidency, and now I give the floor to the Ambassador of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Aryasinha (Sri Lanka): Madam President, distinguished colleagues, I will be leaving Geneva at the end of this month, after completing nearly six years of a challenging, yet rewarding, experience as the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations and other International Organizations.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Michael Møller, the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Anja Kaspersen, the staff of the Conference on Disarmament secretariat, the six presidents of the 2618th session, the regional coordinators and, in particular, the members of the core group, as well as all the members of the Conference on Disarmament who worked with me and my delegation during my country's presidency of the Conference on Disarmament earlier this year. I also

wish to thank members of the observer States of the Conference on Disarmament and all civil society experts who have helped me in both understanding and contributing to the processes of disarmament, whether within the Conference on Disarmament itself or in other disarmament machineries and mechanisms such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which Sri Lanka had the honour to chair in 2015, during which time we were able to evolve a consensus on advancing the mandate on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Madam Chair, the decision you have succeeded in seeing through today makes my moment of departure particularly happy. We had some concern as to how it was going and I commend you for the manner in which you have been able to bring about a consensus in ensuring that the decision was taken. The Conference on Disarmament will now be able to focus on the substantive work, with the appointment of the five coordinators and a schedule of work which was developed based on the principles stipulated in document CD/2119. I also want to acknowledge the significant work done by Ambassador Veronika Bard of Sweden in reaching agreement on the five coordinators who will lead the five subsidiary bodies, based on the principle of equitable geographical representation. I congratulate and wish the very best to the Ambassadors of Indonesia, the Netherlands, Brazil, Germany and Belarus, who will be our coordinators and who will be taking this decision forward.

Madam President, Sri Lanka has been an active player in the field of disarmament for many years. As I relinquish my duties in Geneva, I am pleased that my country's recent presidency was able to make a contribution, through the decision contained in document CD/2119. I believe this has the potential to be irreversible as a first step in moving forward the work of the Conference on Disarmament and reasserting its credibility as the single multilateral forum for negotiating disarmament treaties. Our ability to forge this agreement is testimony to the fact that Sri Lanka makes its best contributions to the international community when it leads from the centre. It would not have worked if our positioning in the Conference on Disarmament had led us either to be taken for granted, or to remain isolated. The decision contained in document CD/2119 was also not an accident and I must say that, if there is any ambiguity in it, it was not a mistake. It was in fact a deliberate and conscious decision, which was unanimously endorsed by all of us to help get the Conference on Disarmament out of the impasse of 22 long years. Once again, today's decision has proved that where there is a will, there is a way, and that members of this body are capable of seizing the momentum and arriving at these decisions. The decision contained in document CD/2119 was also a balance between flexibility and safeguards, and it offered a framework for a more focused and continued debate on all the core issues on the Conference on Disarmament agenda. By collectively endorsing any ambiguity which was there, we have managed to open the window after a stalemate.

I recall here that United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, when addressing the High-Level Segment of the Conference on Disarmament on 26 February 2018, said: "I believe you are off to the best start in nearly two decades, and I look forward to building on this new momentum." In the same spirit, I believe that upholding certain cardinal principles – inclusiveness in consultations, transparency in engagement without a preconceived agenda – and allowing adequate time to deal with the genuine concerns of all member States will undoubtedly help us move through the next steps of operationalizing this decision and bringing the Conference back to substantive work and negotiations. In doing so, the Conference must certainly be guided by the rules of procedure. However, as I said when we were negotiating the decision contained in document CD/2119 and I wish to reiterate now, the Conference on Disarmament must not allow itself to be held captive by those rules. The rule of consensus has not been the reason for the Conference on Disarmament's stalemate; that is down, rather, to a lack of political will. Clearly, the issue is not procedural but political. We will be better served if we use the rule of consensus as a tool for compromise rather than as a veto.

If we are to stay relevant as the sole multilateral body for negotiating disarmament treaties, the Conference on Disarmament has the unenviable task of also striking a compromise between those who believe that only one issue is ripe for negotiation and others who believe that there are equally important low-hanging fruits on the agenda. We were able to overcome that block and reach a compromise earlier this year when we

adopted the decision contained in document CD/2119. We have once again shown that we are capable of doing so, with the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/WP.607. Besides the flexibility shown by all delegations that were closely engaged with us and the subsequent presidencies, it was of particular significance that, once the decision was adopted in February, some of the delegations who had continued to show a degree of scepticism about the Conference on Disarmament process expressed their willingness to work constructively towards the realization of its goals and getting the Conference back to work. We must not lose this momentum. Finally, whether the decision contained in document CD/2119 was a beginning or an aberration remains to be seen, but one thing is certain: the cost of standing in the way of the Conference on Disarmament moving forward has just become greater.

As I leave, my hope is that our recent collective achievements will compel all of us to work harder to iron out whatever difficulties lie ahead, to not shift goalposts and to reach as high as we can. Madam President, distinguished colleagues, I thank you all very sincerely for this opportunity to bid you farewell and wish you every success in your future work, both professional and personal. It has been my honour to work with you.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka for his statement and the kind words addressed to the presidency, and I seize the opportunity to thank him on behalf of the whole Conference for his commitment. On a more personal note, I would like to thank you and add that it was a real pleasure and honour to work closely with you in the framework of the P6. I wish you all the best and much success in your personal and professional future.

I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of India.

Mr. Gill (India): I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, and the entire Conference on Disarmament on the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/WP.607. You have, Madam President, with your two predecessors, run a relay race. Our distinguished colleague from Sri Lanka guided the Conference on Disarmament and helped us adopt the decision contained in document CD/2119 and then your predecessor, Ambassador Veronika Bard, helped us select five excellent coordinators to guide the work of the subsidiary bodies that were envisaged in the decision adopted during the Sri Lankan presidency. Now you have closed the loop by helping us adopt a decision on the appointment of those coordinators and the manner in which their work will be conducted.

Let me be very clear, this is just a first step. It seems a bit out of the ordinary, given the context in which we are operating but, in terms of the vocation of this Conference, it is just a first step, and the overall objective, the goal, remains negotiations, whether we reach them through an iterative process of engagement on substance or through the classical method of a programme of work with negotiating mandates. And in this context, in the light of this goal, my delegation is willing to work constructively and openly with the five coordinators. By the way, these are excellent choices for guiding our substantive work, so we look forward to working with the coordinators on the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament. We have listened carefully to what the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands had to say about his plans for subsidiary body 2. We also listened carefully to our colleague from Germany and we look forward to hearing from the other coordinators about their plans on how they will conduct the substantive work that has been allotted to them.

In some ways, Madam President, we have been innovative with this decision, in terms of the formality of the subsidiary bodies, the fact that we have clustered some items together and that we have provided an opportunity, whether through the decision itself or through what has been stated orally, for some issues other than the four core agenda items to be discussed in the Conference on Disarmament. We remain available and ready to engage on these issues, which are relevant to the substantive work of the Conference.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of India for his statement and the kind words addressed to the presidencies and for reminding us that we should indeed not celebrate too much today: the real work is still ahead of us. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): We wish to thank and recognize the excellent work performed by Ambassador Aryasinha, Ambassador Bard and yourself, Ambassador Dallafior. With respect to Ambassador Aryasinha in particular, I wish him well upon his return to Sri Lanka and once again I wish to express my admiration and gratitude for his successful efforts in allowing us to break the ice in the Conference on Disarmament with the decision contained in document CD/2119. I also thank all members for the trust placed in the coordinators, including myself. I will do my utmost to meet your expectations.

I intend to remain open to consultations and exchanges with all interested members of the Conference on Disarmament on the subject of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. My intention is to start from a common understanding as to where we are in terms of existing norms applicable or relevant to the subject. The number of sessions is relatively limited and, with your agreement, we should strive to fulfil strictly the terms of our mandates, as contained in document CD/2119 and in the present decision contained in document CD/WP.607. My ambition is to identify, during the discussions, areas for potential relevant work. I hope that I will be able to rely on your support, constructive contributions and flexibility. I will also count on the support of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and expertise from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, in particular. I am aware – and this is also the national position of my country – that the decision contained in document CD/2119 is based on a delicate balance which requires progress on all fronts. Therefore, under the guidance of the Presidents, I will also seek to maintain an adequate level of coordination with my fellow coordinators.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Brazil and give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Indonesia.

Mr. Setyawati (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking you, Madam President, for your efforts and for following up the decision contained in document CD/2119. I also wish to thank your predecessors, the Ambassadors of Sweden and Sri Lanka, for their very able stewardship during their tenure of the presidency in paving the way to bring us to today's adoptions of the decisions. I wish to welcome the decisions on the appointment of the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies and the annexed table, and I would also like to echo the comments made regarding the flexibility shown by all member States in finding consensus on pursuing our efforts.

I also wish to thank the members for the trust they have expressed in Indonesia as the coordinator of a subsidiary body and their continued support and constructive engagement in our common efforts in this subsidiary body. Of course, I look forward to working closely with the other coordinators and wish them all the best in their work.

On the workplan, I wish to submit the proposed workplan in due course and, of course, I am looking forward to working closely with you in pursuing our common goals.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Indonesia and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Viet Nam.

Ms. Le Duc Hanh (Viet Nam): It is my great pleasure to take the floor to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for the effort you have devoted to our work so far. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the decisions we have made today and congratulate Madam President on this success. We are also thankful to Ambassador Aryasinha of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Bard of Sweden for the momentum that brought us to today's decision.

In our view, this important decision, which brings us closer to substantive work, is an excellent alternative to help the Conference avoid deadlock in the context of the absence of a programme of work. In fact, the members have shown their goodwill, flexibility and constructive cooperation in order to work out a solution. In our view, the steps taken in the Conference on Disarmament process reflect the willingness to uphold multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations, as the only efficient and rule-based approach in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, as well as an effective tool for building trust. While welcoming today's decision, we also hope that the Member States will be able to find a solution to allow the endorsement and implementation of a programme of work which will enable the official negotiating mandate of the Conference.

Finally, we wish you a successful presidency and I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of our full support. In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the distinguished Ambassadors of Indonesia, the Netherlands, Brazil, Germany and Belarus for being nominated as coordinators of the five respective subsidiary bodies and to assure you of our full support.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Viet Nam for her statement and the kind words addressed to the presidencies and, if the coordinators will allow me, also on their behalf for the kind words addressed to them. I will now turn to the distinguished Ambassador of Sweden.

Ms. Bard (Sweden): I would like, on behalf of my team, to warmly congratulate the Swiss presidency and the very able team on their success in seeing through today's decision, as contained in document CD/WP.607. It has been indeed a great honour, satisfaction and I can even say a great joy to serve between the presidencies of Sri Lanka and Switzerland. Let me also, at this point, wish Ambassador Aryasinha, our dear colleague, well for his return to Sri Lanka. It will, though, continue to be up to us, the member States of this forum, often referred to as this august forum, to decide whether today's decision is a small or a great step.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Sweden and give the floor to the distinguished representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Latif (Pakistan): As this is our first time taking the floor under your presidency, let me begin by congratulating you on assuming this position and assure you of the full support of our delegation. We deeply appreciate the work done by your two predecessors this year, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka in facilitating the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/2119 and the Ambassador of Sweden in identifying five coordinators on the basis of equitable regional representation to lead the work of the subsidiary bodies. These efforts were critical in bringing us closer to the resumption of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament. We wish the Ambassador of Sri Lanka very well for his future and thank him for all his contributions to the Conference on Disarmament.

By the end of the Swedish presidency, we came quite close to formally putting in place an operative framework to implement the decision adopted. We faltered at the end, not due to the lack of political will that often afflicts the Conference on Disarmament, but because of the differing interpretations suiting our respective priorities that were at odds with the decision contained in document CD/2119. We are glad that all those issues have been amicably resolved under your leadership.

Madam President, you undertook extensive consultations right from the moment that you took the baton from the Swedish Ambassador. Our delegation engaged with you most constructively in this endeavour to find a compromise that would address the concerns of all member States in order to commence implementation of the decision contained in document CD/2119. We commend and congratulate you on your success in presenting a package that met with a consensus of approval from the Conference on Disarmament. It would not have been possible without the commitment and flexibility shown by all the delegations concerned. We are pleased to note that, with the adoption of this decision today, we have put in place a structure for holding substantive discussions on all agenda items. Our delegation will actively participate in this activity and utilize it to its optimum potential. It is an opportunity to develop a better understanding for building convergences. We hope that all member States will participate in the meetings of the five subsidiary bodies with equal zeal and enthusiasm.

Madam President, we note here the statement made by the coordinator of subsidiary body number 2, the Ambassador of the Netherlands, highlighting his intention to devote one of the sessions to issues other than fissile materials. This would allow member States to raise and discuss pertinent issues that logically fall under agenda item number 2. Let me also take this opportunity to pledge our full support and cooperation to each one of the five coordinators and thank them for volunteering for these positions. We look forward to working with them closely in the weeks ahead.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Pakistan for the statement and her kind words addressed to the presidencies. Would any other delegations like to take the floor on this matter? The Ambassador of India has the floor.

Mr. Gill (India): I wanted to separate my remarks on the farewell speech of Ambassador Aryasinha from our substantive discussion on document CD/WP.607. It has been a privilege and a real joy to work with Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, whether in this chamber on the work of the Conference on Disarmament, in the small rooms around this chamber, or in the discussions on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, where, as he reminded us today, he set us on a good course in 2015 with consensus on a mandate for the work on lethal autonomous weapons systems. It is remarkable how he has found the time to be active on disarmament issues given his other responsibilities, in particular in the Human Rights Council, where he has defended his country's interests with success and with distinction. He is moving on back to Colombo for an important assignment and I would like, on my behalf and on the behalf of the Indian delegation, to wish all the very best to him in his new official role and all the very best to his family as they move back to mother Lanka.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of India, and give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): I would also like to join my colleague, the Ambassador of India, in expressing our appreciation for the work of our dear friend Ambassador Aryasinha in leading us to this point. We had in many ways not lost hope, but found ourselves in a cul-de-sac, and I do understand all the time and effort that he committed to the Conference on Disarmament to get the wheels running here, particularly at the time when the Human Rights Council machinery was in full play and he very brilliantly defended his country's position there. So I really would like to acknowledge his professional excellence in this, on behalf of myself and of the Pakistan delegation.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan. We can all subscribe to both his statement and that of the Ambassador of India.

I would like to conclude the proceedings regarding document CD/WP.607. I do not see any other delegation wishing to take the floor on this issue. So once again, I congratulate the whole Conference on this decision.

I now open the floor for any other matter. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): I will begin by congratulating all three Presidents and also all of our colleagues on the decision we just made. I cannot help thinking that having the curtains open actually makes a difference and I suggest that we continue in that fashion during the substantive discussions. I would also like to congratulate you, Madam President, on the verification panel that you organized last Friday. I thought that was very substantive and a very good discussion and, if that is any indication of what the substantive discussions will be like, it was a very good pilot.

Madam President, I take the floor to outline Australia's response to the nerve agent attack in the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister announced today that two Russian diplomats identified as undeclared intelligence officers will be expelled by the Australian Government for actions inconsistent with their status, pursuant to the Vienna Conventions. The two officials will be directed to depart Australia within seven days. This decision reflects the shocking nature of the attack, the first offensive use of chemical weapons in Europe since the Second World War, involving a highly lethal substance in a populated area, endangering countless other members of the community. It takes into account advice from the United Kingdom Government that the substance used on 4 March was a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia. Such an attack cannot be tolerated by any sovereign nation. We strongly support the call on Russia to disclose the full extent of its chemical weapons programme in accordance with international law.

Australia condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. There is no circumstance that justifies the use of such indiscriminate,

abhorrent weapons. The Salisbury attack is a direct challenge to the international rules-based order and the global non-proliferation system. The international community needs to demonstrate zero tolerance for future acts of this nature.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Australia and give the floor to the distinguished representative of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Before beginning, I would like to congratulate all Conference on Disarmament members on adopting the decision contained in document CD/WP.607.

Madam Ambassador, the 4 March attack on our closest ally, the United Kingdom, put countless innocent lives, including children, at risk and resulted in serious injury to three people, including a police officer. This was a reckless attempt by the Russian Government to murder a British citizen and his daughter on British soil, with a military-grade nerve agent. It cannot go unanswered.

In response to this outrageous violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and breach of international law, the United States will expel 48 Russian officials serving at Russia's bilateral mission to the United States. We will also require the Russian Government to close its Consulate-General in Seattle by 2 April 2018. The Salisbury attack was only the latest in a long series of Russian efforts to undermine international peace and stability. Russia has shown malicious contempt for the sovereignty and security of countries worldwide. It has repeatedly sought to subvert and discredit Western institutions. We stand in solidarity with America's closest ally, the United Kingdom. To the Russian Government we say, "When you attack our friends, you will face serious consequences." We do not act alone. We take these actions in concert with similar steps by more than a dozen allies and partners. As we have continually stressed to Moscow, the door to dialogue is always open. But if Russia wants to improve relations, it first needs to acknowledge its responsibility for this attack and cease its recklessly aggressive behaviour.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the United States, and now give the floor to the distinguished representative of China.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thank you, Madam President. Regarding the poisoning case in London, the Chinese delegation has noted the stances taken recently by the countries in question in relation to this case. We hope that all parties will base their actions on the relevant international rules and principles and will carry out a comprehensive, objective and impartial investigation based on hard evidence to arrive at a factual conclusion borne out by history. We hope that the respective parties will use the appropriate channels to deal properly with this question. It is our belief that, at this juncture, this question should be referred to our colleagues in The Hague for discussion.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sympathy with the Russian delegation in the wake of the fire that caused heavy casualties in Kemerovo, Siberia and express our condolences to the victims. For those who have been injured, we wish them a rapid recovery.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of China and give the floor to the distinguished representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Let me join others in congratulating you, Madam President, and your predecessors this year in your successful efforts to get this body functioning. I would also like to convey my personal best wishes to Ambassador Aryasinha as he moves to pastures new and our thanks to him for his leadership and the contribution he has made within our community.

Ten days ago, I reported on the expulsion from the United Kingdom of 23 Russian officials, part of the United Kingdom's response to our conclusion that Russia was most likely responsible for the use of a nerve agent on British soil on 4 March. We cannot know the real reason for such a reckless act, which only endangered innocent lives. But it is difficult not to conclude that it was a deliberate attempt to provoke us to rash action or to humiliate my country. There will be no rash action, but a calm, calculated pushback on Russia's attempts to undermine the international rules-based system, of which the expulsion

of Russian officials in the United Kingdom was just the first step. Nor are we in any way humiliated. In times of adversity, our values come to the fore and the nation stands united and resolute and, as has become all the more evident over the last few weeks, we stand united amongst many States, States who have suffered from Russia's hostile actions, States who feel the threat from Russia more keenly each day and States who deplore Russia's actions to undermine the system of collective security on which we all depend. So, while we are not in any way humiliated, we are humbled that our actions have catalysed such a strong, shared response. In the wave of expulsions of Russian officials from 23 States that have taken place in the last 24 hours, States have sent Russia a very clear signal that they will not tolerate its actions in flagrant disregard of international law, nor its attempt to undermine our values. Russia needs to pay heed.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I see the distinguished representative of Germany.

Mr. Pilz (Germany): In the context of the Salisbury attack, I would like to state the following for the record. The Federal Government of Germany has, in close consultation with the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies, decided to ask four Russian diplomats to leave Germany within seven days. The request was transferred to the Russian Embassy in Berlin. Last week, the European Council agreed with the assessment of the British Government that Russia is highly likely to be responsible for the poison attack against Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury and that there is no other plausible explanation for this despicable act. So far Russia has not responded to the British demand to contribute appropriately to the resolution of the case. The expulsion of the four diplomats is to be seen as a strong signal of solidarity with Great Britain and signals the resolve of the Federal Government not to leave attacks on our closest allies and partners without a response. This move is also to be seen against the background of the recent cyber operation against the protected information technology system of the Federal Government, which can be attributed with high likelihood to Russian sources. We appeal to the Russian Government to deal with the situation responsibly. It is Russia which needs to actively contribute to the investigation and to respond to the questions posed by the United Kingdom. Russia needs to fully cooperate with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and transparently declare all facts related to the Novichok programme.

While our resolve to react jointly with our partners and allies remains strong, we also state our continued readiness for dialogue with Russia. I also refer to the statement delivered by our Foreign Minister yesterday, which is available on the website of the Foreign Ministry.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Germany and give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Belarus.

Mr. Ambrazevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam President, I would like to congratulate you on the adoption of the decision and, on my part, as one of the coordinators, assure you that the Republic of Belarus and its delegation here in Geneva will do everything in our power to move the discussions forward, but also note the most important aspect, which is that, without a unanimous opinion in the room, this task is almost impossible. We are hoping for a concert of nations on this matter.

In the context of the Skripal case, we would like to state that the Republic of Belarus condemns any illegal use of toxic chemicals, particularly of chemical weapons. Every instance in which they may have been used must be duly investigated. If the investigation includes an international component, the corresponding internationally recognized mechanisms must be involved. We believe that political discussions and the anticipation of conclusions before the results of the criminal investigation are received are at the very least counterproductive, especially in international forums whose mandates do not directly concern the core issue. Such anticipation puts pressure on the investigation and can call its impartiality into question.

Belarus takes a principled stand against unilateral economic and political coercive measures. Their use runs counter to the existing international legal order and leads to the elimination of any remaining trust between Governments and, even worse, to hostility

between peoples. We hold that discussion on this matter must be limited to the platform of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, where we have the relevant experts available.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sympathy to the relatives and loved ones of the victims, and also to the entire Russian Federation, in connection with the fire in Kemerovo.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Belarus and now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): In line with the remarks of my Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I would like to say a few words on this matter. The Netherlands was shocked by the attack in Salisbury with a military-grade nerve agent. The Netherlands has condemned the attack in the strongest possible way. We fully support the United Kingdom authorities in their investigations. It is essential that the truth should come to light and that those responsible should be held to account. We expect Russia to provide full disclosure of the Novichok programme to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We would like to echo the European Council, which on 22 March agreed that there is no possible alternative explanation, that it is highly likely that Russia is responsible and that the attack in Salisbury constitutes a serious threat to our collective security and international law. The Government of the Netherlands notified the Russian authorities yesterday of our decision to expel two Russian diplomats from the Netherlands within two weeks.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands and now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Aala (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me at the outset to join previous speakers in congratulating you on the successful submission to the Conference of the decision that has just been adopted. We hope that it will permit us to focus on the substantive work that is pending before the Conference. I also wish to join previous speakers in expressing our deep appreciation to Ambassador Aryasinha, the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, who will leave us at the end of this month. We greatly appreciate the significant and important contribution that he has made to the work of the Conference, including through the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/2119, which helped to break the ice that has prevented this chamber from reaching a consensus on the adoption of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that would enable the Conference to begin discharging its negotiating mandate.

Permit me also to extend our heartfelt condolences to our colleagues in the delegation of the Russian Federation for the victims of the incident in a Russian shopping centre.

Madam President, our position in the Syrian Arab Republic concerning allegations of the use of chemical weapons is based on the premise that such charges must be fully and comprehensively investigated by the competent international organizations, in this case the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Accordingly, I agree with my colleagues in the delegations of Belarus and China that the appropriate location for discussing this issue is OPCW in The Hague. We believe that article IX (2) of the Chemical Weapons Convention requires that this issue should be discussed extensively through exchanges of information and consultations in order to clarify all aspects thereof within the framework of OPCW in The Hague.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic and now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Ireland.

Ms. Cullen (Ireland): We stand in solidarity with you and your presidency and we commend the herculean efforts and resilience of the three presidencies of this year: Sri Lanka, Sweden and Switzerland. Well done, this is progress indeed. We look forward to the meetings that you have arranged and we thank the coordinators for volunteering their valuable time.

Turning to Salisbury, the United Kingdom is Ireland's closest neighbour and friend and we are in complete solidarity with the British Government as they deal with the circumstances and consequences of this appalling attack. Ireland shares the United Kingdom and European Council assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible and that there is no other plausible explanation. The use of chemical weapons in any circumstances is completely unacceptable. This morning in Dublin, the Prime Minister is discussing in cabinet with government ministers the appropriate action to take in relation to the Russian embassy in Dublin, in the light of security considerations and in solidarity with the actions taken by the United Kingdom and others.

Chemical weapons, we are all agreed, are barbaric. Let us not be reserved in our condemnation of the attack in Salisbury nor in our commitment to seek justice for those who have suffered. We must be united in supporting a thorough investigation so that the perpetrators of this crime can be held accountable. I will conclude by sharing our wishes for the full recovery of the victims of the attack on 4 March. I would also like to extend our thoughts and prayers to the victims and survivors past and present whose lives have been irrevocably impacted by the use of chemical weapons and to whom we all share a duty in striving to ensure that we meet our objectives and one day secure our goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Ireland and now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation. Sir you have the floor.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are assuming that all the delegations who wanted to express an opinion on this matter have spoken. We would then like to exercise our right of reply, and with your permission I will give the floor to my colleague.

Mr. Davydov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Distinguished colleagues, I would first of all like to apologize to the parties to the Conference for those delegations who are dragging the Conference into a pointless politicized polemic on the Skripal case, to the detriment of its primary functions.

If anybody thinks that that is not the case, I will give just one example. As you know, at the start of the session and during the high-level segment, a lot was said about the importance of the urgent resolution of our shared primary objective, which is to agree on a programme of work for the Disarmament Conference. Now we are hearing practically nothing of the kind. Is that a coincidence? I do not think so. As you can all understand, when unsubstantiated anti-Russian accusations are hurled again and again on the floor of the Conference, we are left with no other option than to react. In this regard, we propose to make sense of the Skripal case together.

Even without being specialists in the field of chemical weapons, we can nonetheless analyse the logic of the actions carried out by the British authorities and come to our own conclusions on certain circumstances of the events of 4 March. Especially since the statements of British officials give us plenty of food for thought.

For a better understanding, I will quote some of these statements in the original English:

(*spoke in English*)

“Based on the positive identification of this chemical agent by world leading experts at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down, Mr. Skripal and his daughter were poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia. This is part of a group of nerve agents known as ‘Novichok’.” This is from the Prime Minister’s statement to the House of Commons on the Salisbury incident on 12 March 2018.

(*spoke in Russian*)

These statements speak for themselves. Even without being specialists in the field of chemical weapons, it is clear that the British experts have identified a specific type of toxic substance, which they call Novichok. That means that the British specialists had access to at least its chemical formula.

Another significant conclusion. The chemical formula was in the British laboratory even before the Salisbury incident. Otherwise they could not have determined so quickly exactly which substance was used. By way of comparison, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) requires no less than three weeks to confirm the results obtained in the Porton Down laboratory.

For us, this raises an obvious question, actually more than one.

Firstly, how long have the British experts been in possession of the formula for the so-called Novichok: 1 year, 2 years, maybe 10? But the main question is how did they get it? Was it on their own, through research and development, or did someone give it to them? And under what circumstances?

Another important question is this: how should these actions be qualified from the standpoint of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention? After all, as we are told, this concerns a chemical warfare agent. However, distinguished colleagues, that is just the beginning. The most interesting part is yet to come.

The fact of the matter is that the chemical formula is not sufficient to identify the country where the substance was produced. For that you need standard samples for comparison, i.e. in the case of Russia, the British specialists needed to have samples of Novichok received directly from Russia. That raises just as many questions as the issue of the chemical formula. Judging by the previous statement and those I am about to quote, the British specialists do have such samples.

(spoke in English)

“Our knowledge is that Russia has previously produced this agent.” This is also from the Prime Minister’s statement to the House of Commons on the Salisbury incident on 12 March.

(spoke in Russian)

Or:

(spoke in English)

“Russian scientists developed Novichok starting in the 1970s.” From an article in the Washington Post by the Foreign Secretary.

(spoke in Russian)

By the way, the second assertion is not strictly historically accurate, since in the 1970s, it was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and not the Russian Federation. That is my first point. However, the most important point is that similar assertions made at the highest political level demonstrate that the Government of the United Kingdom has not only samples but also fairly detailed additional information on this topic. In support of this conclusion, here are some further quotes.

(spoke in English)

“Today only Russia has stockpiles of Novichok agents. On Monday 12 March, I summoned the Russian Ambassador and gave his Government 36 hours to inform us if any of these stocks had somehow gone missing.” That is also from the article in the Washington Post by the Foreign Secretary. “Russia has an undeclared chemical weapons programme in contravention of international law.” That is also from the Prime Minister’s statement to the House of Commons on the Salisbury incident on 14 March 2018.

(spoke in Russian)

I would like to draw the attention of the delegations to the fact that we are not inventing any of this. I think that the statements speak for themselves. Moreover, such serious accusations require an equally solid basis, that is the information must be reliable and repeatedly verified through different channels. Something like that cannot be done in two weeks. The conclusion is obvious: the United Kingdom Government had this information long before 4 March.

Now the most important point, and this is not about Russia. We have rejected and will continue to reject any such unfounded accusation directed at us. At the briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia on 21 March where, if not all, then the majority of parties to the Conference on Disarmament were present, representatives of the Russian authorities gave exhaustive explanations on all issues.

This is now about the United Kingdom. Why did the United Kingdom Government, which was in possession of detailed information, not immediately hand it over to OPCW as required by article 9 of the Convention in the event of suspicions regarding non-compliance with OPCW provisions? Thus, it basically follows that it hid its suspicions or even facts concerning possible non-compliance with the Convention from OPCW and the international community. What should that be called? Russian legislation defines it as criminal omission. If that is not the case, then why did representatives from the United Kingdom not declare their suspicions against Russia to OPCW? Why did they not mention their concerns about the certification by OPCW on completion of the destruction of our chemical weapons stockpile last year? To be honest, we have very little doubt that this question, like many others, will go unanswered. It must be said that we are used to that.

Distinguished colleagues, for those of you who wish to have a better idea of the official Russian viewpoint, copies of an unofficial English translation of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs memo outlining our position on the Skripal case will be placed on the table next to the door on your way out. This document was circulated during the briefing for the diplomatic corps in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia on 21 March.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I think that the picture would be incomplete without one more quotation from the press conference of the United Kingdom Ambassador in Moscow on 22 March. I think that this quote is a very clear demonstration of the attitude of the British authorities to Russia.

However, I will start with something slightly different. I will give two quotations. I will not make any comment on either of them, because they are already perfectly clear.

So:

(*spoke in English*)

“Four days later after the incident the analysts at Porton Down” – I would like to stress four days later – “the analysts at Porton Down established that this was a military-grade chemical weapon, one of the Novichok series – a nerve agent produced in Russia. Novichok was produced in Russia by the Russian State.” Second quotation: “A mission from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is in the United Kingdom now to independently confirm this analysis.” Is it a prejudgment? The conclusion is yours. And the last one. “We have no reason to work with or to trust the Russian State to provide credible or independent analysis on issues where its interests might be affected.” So nobody ever expected anything from us.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation and give now the floor to the distinguished representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Demchenko (Ukraine): First of all, the Ukrainian delegation would like to commend all three presidencies for their hard work and congratulate all of us with the adoption of the decision contained in document CD/WP.607.

Distinguished delegates, as it was stated yesterday by Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, in response to the cynical chemical attack in Salisbury, Ukraine, in a spirit of solidarity with our British partners and transatlantic allies and in coordination with European Union countries, has decided to expel 13 Russian diplomats from Ukrainian territory. Russia, through the poisoning of its former intelligence officer Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Great Britain, once again confirmed its contemptuous attitude not only towards the sovereignty of independent States but also towards the value of human life. Ukraine feels this attitude every day in the occupied Ukrainian Crimea and in Donbass. Our joint response should continue to be decisive and tough in order to prevent new human tragedies and ensure respect for international law.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of Ukraine and give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I need to take the floor to respond to some things that were said by our Russian colleagues. I believe one of them referred to concerns expressed in this body about the attack in Salisbury as, I believe, a political polemic. The concerns raised in this body are about one State conducting a chemical weapons attack against another. I remind everyone that this august body once negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention, so remarks that this body should not be discussing this issue are not serious or credible. Russian officials, in my view, need to get their story straight, as I think many of us heard a couple of weeks back from one particular Russian official that neither the Soviet Union nor Russia had ever produced Novichok. We also heard another official, subsequently, in various press reports say that Russia no longer produced Novichok. So the question that I have for our Russian colleagues is: which is it? Russia has routinely insisted that it has destroyed its entire chemical weapons stockpile. In my view, I think it needs to seriously go back and at a minimum do some more thorough accounting.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the United States and give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Everyone in this room understands the seriousness of expelling officials working at diplomatic missions. The decisions taken by 23 countries yesterday and that others are considering today should demonstrate the confidence that those countries have in the United Kingdom's assessment. What we have just heard is a perfect example of Russia's attempts to deny and distract from an act that has produced unexpected results. We have been monitoring Russia's attempts at disinformation over the last few weeks and I will give a brief resumé of some of them because I think they are important.

So Russia 24, the TV outlet, said on 8 March that it was an accidental exposure due to the proximity to Porton Down. Russia One, another TV channel, to my understanding said on 8 March that it was suicide – addiction and stress are common amongst defectors. RT on 8 March spoke of some trustworthy or complicit testing at Porton Down. RIA Novosti on 8 March said it was an accidental overdose of a nerve agent. Russia One also on 8 March said it was just an attempt to stoke Russophobia. Russia One on 11 March had changed its story and said the Brits did it: if you consider carefully who benefits, it is the British. Russia One on 12 March said the Americans did it to destabilize the world, inflame Russophobia and force the United Kingdom to isolate Russia. A day later, Russia One said Ukraine did it to frame Russia. Sergei Lavrov, the United Nations Ambassador and Russia's Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said on 15 March that the British were responding like this to distract attention from Brexit. Mk.ru said on 14 March it was clearly the mother-in-law. The spokeswoman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 17 March said Russia has made progress in Syria and this was an attempt to undermine its role as a peacemaker. Pravda said on 17 March that Skripal was a chemical weapons smuggler. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman said on 17 March that only the United Kingdom, the Czechs, the Swedes or the Slovaks would have this weapon. A day later Zeta, I believe speaking for the Russian Ministry of Defence, said it was a drone attack. President Putin himself said "We destroyed all our chemical weapons" and "If it was military, the people would have died on the spot".

This, as I say, is a long list of Russian attempts to instil disinformation in the public information space. To others who seem to want to echo Russia's line, I would direct them to the Wikipedia site which tells us what a sock puppet is. A sock puppet is an identity used for purposes of deception. The term, a reference to the manipulation of a simple hand puppet made from a sock originally referred to a false identity assumed by a member of an Internet community who spoke to or about themselves while pretending to be another person. The term now includes other misleading uses of identities such as those created to praise, defend or support a person or organization in order to manipulate public opinion or to circumvent a suspension or ban from a website. Sock puppets are unwelcome in many communities and may be blocked.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the United Kingdom and give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): You know, sometimes translations are not completely accurate when it comes to the substance of the debate. You can tell the difference! Our esteemed British colleague was mainly relying on reports from the Russian media, while we used direct quotations from statements by high-ranking United Kingdom officials. On one occasion, Ambassador Rowland did not quote the Russian President quite correctly. The first part was rendered properly. President Putin was speaking Russian, and here we return to questions of translation and interpretation.

In this regard, I would like to draw the attention of our colleagues, especially those from the United States and the United Kingdom, to the possibility of looking at the Russian briefing of 21 March, where representatives from the Russian governmental departments, specifically not only from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also from the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, who are responsible for implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention in Russia, gave exhaustive explanations on this subject. In a more condensed form, the Russian position is outlined in the document which you can find in the location indicated by my colleague.

The President: I thank the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem the case. Well, distinguished colleagues, before closing this meeting, I once more would like to congratulate the Conference for the decision taken this morning. I would like particularly to express my gratitude to you all, as Conference on Disarmament members, for your flexibility. As we have heard this morning from several of you, much remains to be done to revitalize the Conference, and we still have many challenges to meet to this effect.

The first one will be to ensure that the subsidiary bodies will be productive, but I am heartened by the progress achieved so far and the spirit of cooperation that has characterized the 2018 session. The Conference will now take a break. It will resume for the second part of its 2018 session on 14 May. Subsidiary bodies will start meeting this very week, which means that the Conference on Disarmament will have to work in a more sustained manner than so far this year. So I hope that you will all come back well rested, energized and ready to meet this challenge.

Finally, and not least, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the conference officers, the interpreters and all the staff who supported us through our many meetings. The Secretariat will inform you of the date of the next plenary meeting in due course. With this, this meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.