

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Thursday, 30 January 2003, at 10.15 a.m.

President:

Mr. Rakesh Sood

(India)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 918th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have seven speakers on my list today: Ambassador Chiaradia of Argentina, Ambassador Levy of Israel, Ambassador Sanders of the Netherlands, Ambassador Petritsch of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the Human Security Network, Ambassador Alborzi of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 21, Ambassador Lint of Belgium and Mr. Santana of Venezuela.

I would also like to take this opportunity to convey a special word of welcome to Ambassador Chiaradia of Argentina, who is among us today. He has come to Geneva recently and the fact that so soon after his arrival in Geneva, and on what is virtually his first day in a plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, he is taking the floor to make a plenary statement says a great deal about Argentina's commitment to the Conference and the interest that he personally brings to this forum. I therefore have great pleasure in giving him the floor.

Mr. CHIARADIA (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, first of all, may I extend to you my deep appreciation for the very warm welcome that you have just extended to me and assure you that it is a great honour for me to be part of this body responsible for negotiations on disarmament in the framework of the United Nations.

As this is my first occasion to be taking the floor in the Conference, I would like, Mr. President, to assure you of the full support of my delegation and myself as we seek to move forward in our work and tackle the substantive items of our agenda. Allow me, furthermore, to extend our special greetings to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference, and Ambassador Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General. We would also like to express our thanks to the members of the secretariat for the invaluable support that they have been providing for our work.

As part of the general aim of achieving a peaceful and stable world conducive to the comprehensive development of all its people, special importance is attached in Argentina's foreign policy to enhancing international security through the strengthening of regimes for the prohibition and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, building consensus in support of arms control and intensifying the dialogue in the Americas on sensitive issues on the international security agenda. Argentina considers it vital to maintain its excellent relations of friendship and cooperation with its neighbours and is of the view that this will lead to greater stability to the benefit of the entire region.

The southern cone of South America is manifestly an area of non-proliferation and, over the past decade, it has demonstrated significant progress in further consolidating these achievements. Thus, the Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC), set up by Argentina and Brazil in 1991, has now been in operation for 12 years. ABACC has

(Mr. Chiaradia, Argentina)

gathered considerable experience in applying safeguards, and this has earned it international commendation and brought it genuinely closer to the objective for which it was established, namely, to ensure the transparency of the nuclear programmes of both countries and the exclusively peaceful purposes of Argentina's and Brazil's nuclear activities.

Also within the context of our hemisphere, on 18 August 2002, our country welcomed Cuba's accession to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which has led to the world's first inhabited nuclear-weapon-free zone, comprising all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Notwithstanding the progress made in our region, the international strategic situation has not been particularly encouraging over the past few years. There is still concern at the continuing risks of proliferation, which runs counter to efforts by the international community to eliminate nuclear weapons. This and the threat that nuclear materials could fall into the hands of terrorists necessitate concerted preventive action by the international community to strengthen and enhance the effectiveness of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is the main instrument for preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the main multilateral agreement on the control of such weapons. We believe that it is essential for this multilateral instrument to be universally applied and we therefore continue to press those States which have not yet ratified it, particularly those States which possess nuclear weapons, to do so without reservation or conditions.

At the same time, we are concerned at setbacks in this area. Thus, on 14 January 2003, the Government of Argentina urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reconsider its decision to withdraw from the NPT.

Argentina views the forthcoming meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the NPT Review Conference as a new opportunity to ensure the effective implementation of the measures agreed on to ensure implementation of article VI of the Treaty. Among these, we stress in particular the necessary signatures and ratifications for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the immediate launching in the Conference on Disarmament of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

While we await the ratifications necessary for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we urge countries to maintain the moratorium on nuclear testing and to continue supporting the Treaty's international monitoring system.

It is now generally agreed that missile proliferation poses a problem for international peace and security. It is therefore vital that global norms be established which both restrict the proliferation of missiles and promote a worldwide culture that opposes ballistic missiles. In this context, Argentina supports the view that the International Code of Conduct, which we signed in The Hague on 26 November 2002, should be universal in scope. It has also joined the

(Mr. Chiaradia, Argentina)

United Nations panel of governmental experts on missiles and at the same time supports the establishment of a subsidiary body in the Conference on Disarmament to consider issues relating to the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

Our role as chair of the Missile Technology Control Regime for the period 2003-2004 is further evidence of the great importance that we attach to the control of sensitive exports as a part of our commitment to the regime of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including their delivery systems. At the same time, we consider it of fundamental importance to reaffirm the right of States to the development of peaceful space programmes, which include issues relating to access to space and space-related technologies, both in the context of the Russian Federation initiative on the Global Control System and the working document jointly submitted by China and the Russian Federation under the symbol CD/1680.

The issue of chemical weapons is a clear example of effective and responsible multilateral cooperation in an endeavour which brings together 145 States. In order to attain the objectives and purposes of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the international community has at its disposal the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which has the task of ensuring full implementation of the Convention's provisions, including those relating to verification of compliance, monitoring the destruction of all the world's chemical weapon stockpiles and providing States parties with a forum for consultation and cooperation.

Argentina fully subscribes to the basic mission of OPCW, namely, to achieve the universal application and timely and effective attainment of all the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention, in line with the shared aspiration of the international community to ensure that chemical weapons should never be used, either by States or by individuals or groups.

We remain fully committed to the process and activities necessary for strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention and we encourage States parties to go to the forthcoming meetings of the follow-up mechanism agreed upon at the Fifth Review Conference of the Convention with substantive initiatives covering an aspect of security which, as time has shown, represents more than a mere hypothetical threat to the safety of the international community.

Argentina considers the development of transparency and confidence-building measures to be a matter of fundamental importance. The consultation and coordination mechanisms that have been set out in place in our region provide a framework for relations that will have a positive impact on the pace of political, economic and social integration. The eleventh meeting of the Permanent Committee on Bilateral Security, held in 2002 between Chile and Argentina, led to such initiatives as the common standardized methodology for measuring defence spending agreed upon between these two countries, which serves as a model for the region as a whole, the conduct of joint military exercises, the shared use of an Antarctic base, the drawing up of a regional security model and cooperation in the realm of outer space.

(Mr. Chiaradia, Argentina)

We are convinced that the close ties with our neighbours which we are actively developing will enable us all to become more effectively involved in activities at the regional, hemispheric and global levels. Thus, it should be noted that the members of MERCOSUR, namely, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, together with the two associated countries, Bolivia and Chile, have proclaimed their subregion as an area free of anti-personnel mines.

In this respect my country will continue to campaign actively in all relevant forums for the unanimous international acceptance of the principles and objectives of the Ottawa Convention, as exemplified by the assistance rendered by our armed forces in mine clearance work carried out in various continents under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of American States

To conclude my observations, I would like to stress that re-establishing the authority within the United Nations of the Conference on Disarmament on matters relating to disarmament and arms control should be one of the most compelling objectives of the Member States. That said, it must be acknowledged that, in addition to the political will which is so vital if our negotiations are to gain their necessary momentum, great efforts are required to bring together the mosaic of diverse interests espoused by the various countries involved. We would therefore like to underscore our special appreciation for the outstanding professional work of the distinguished ambassadors of Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden, who, on the basis of their initiative on a programme of work for the Conference, have been encouraging us to explore all possibilities to achieve a consensus that will allow us to fulfil our responsibilities. In that endeavour, Mr. President, I pledge our full cooperation and commitment.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Argentina for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Israel.

Mr. LEVY (Israel): Mr. President, since this is my first time to address the plenary, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of a demanding task: opening the year of work and guiding us through the first session. Bearing in mind the considerable amount of work ahead of us, please rest assured of my delegation's fullest cooperation.

In addressing the myriad security problems in the Middle East in a balanced manner, it is incumbent upon us to examine the unique regional characteristics that challenge and undermine stability in our area.

Peace and reconciliation could reduce the arms race in our region to the minimal levels required for national self-defence. An effective security regime based on arms control measures can only be achieved and sustained in a region where wars and armed conflicts, terror and political hostility, incitement and non-recognition cease to be features of everyday life.

(Mr. Levy, Israel)

Arms control is not a goal in itself; it is, rather, a means by which countries and Governments strengthen the security and the well-being of their citizens. A world free of weapons of mass destruction is a noble goal which we believe should be achieved through the building of confidence and trust among all the countries concerned.

In our region, political reality requires a practical step-by-step approach in order to achieve this confidence. This approach should be based on reconciliation and comprehensive peace between Israel and its neighbours. The establishment of peace should be accompanied and strengthened by confidence-building measures and arrangements regarding conventional weapons, culminating in the eventual establishment of a mutually verifiable zone free of ballistic missiles and of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. This zone would include all the States of the region, and would result from the establishment of mutual recognition and free and direct negotiations among them. The absence of recognition, the lack of direct contact and the refusal to accept the right of one State to exist undermine the attainment of confidence and trust.

It is therefore our strong belief that the regional context should be the primary and essential framework to advance critical arms control measures, predicated on a comprehensive and durable peace in the area of the Middle East.

In recent years, Israel has sought to lay enduring foundations for peace and stability in its region, based on a historic reconciliation, embodying the notions of compromise, mutual trust, respect, open borders and good neighbourliness. The basis for coexistence between Israel and its neighbours was laid in the bilateral peace treaties with Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994. We still hope to widen this process and turn the vision of peace and stability that we have for our region into a reality.

Israel believes that recent global and regional developments pose an acute challenge to the efforts of the international community to arrest the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and to promote arms control. These alarming developments include: the continued export of weapons of mass destruction, delivery vehicles, know-how and technologies, including by members of the suppliers' regimes; the continued development and production of weapons of mass destruction, as well as their means of delivery, by States parties to conventions that prohibit their development and production; the demonstrated weakness of international verification instruments in detecting prohibited clandestine activities that clearly violate undertakings reached under arms control treaties.

These issues merit consideration and discussion. For its part, Israel stands ready to participate in such discussions. Ideas will be evaluated according to their contribution to the promotion of global and regional non-proliferation and stability, taking into account Israel's national security requirements and concerns.

Israel is naturally aware of the difficulties and disagreements regarding the programme of work. We are carefully following the different initiatives to resolve this issue. When a proposal is made that is broadly accepted, primarily by the relevant parties to the current disagreement, Israel will determine its position on its merits.

(Mr. Levy, Israel)

These days our attention is also focused on the threat of terrorism to our societies, institutions, ways of life and peace of mind. No one today can feel immune. Not only does terrorism claim the lives of thousands, but it also places all of us at risk.

Unfortunately, Israel has been at the forefront of those countries and societies victimized by terrorism in recent decades, but especially so most recently, as young people, brainwashed by their peers, have been committing the ultimate insanity of suicide-bombings in crowded places, cafes, restaurants, universities, buses and public squares, murdering hundreds and wounding thousands. Terror has also taken the form of cross-border attacks, hijacking and attacks on civil aviation, such as the recent attack against an Arkia plane at Mobasa airport, and the use of short-range rockets against population centres in Israel. In recent years these terrorist acts in all their manifestations have touched almost every family in Israel and have become part of the daily lives of Israelis.

Terror has become a strategic weapon, not only in the context of the Middle East, but on a global scale as well. The objective of its perpetrators is not only to kill and maim, but also to scare and scar the human fabric of civilian populations. These consequences cannot be justified by citing alleged extenuating circumstances.

Lately much has been said and discussed here about the disturbing possibility of a connection between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

The danger of such a link casts as dark a shadow on the strategic environment as it does on the regional one, particularly in the Middle East. Clearly, it is all the more alarming in a region in which certain countries have nurtured terror as a tool of diplomacy. These same countries have also been seeking to develop weapons of mass destruction in breach of their international commitments and have proved their readiness to supply and arm terrorist groups with conventional weaponry and rockets. There exists a real danger that such countries will provide these same groups with non-conventional weapons.

Israel is, unfortunately, one of the only countries in this body that still faces a variety of threats, ranging from single acts of terrorism to all-out war. Even the threat of an unconventional attack has become a normal aspect of daily life in Israel. As we speak today, Israelis are lining up to equip themselves with gas masks. The reason for their doing so is the fear of a non-conventional attack from a country that has no direct dispute with us.

Unfortunately, their concerns are justified. During the Gulf war, 12 years ago, under the orders of the same leader who is today the cause of regional and worldwide instability, Israel was the target of 39 unprovoked ballistic missile attacks. This is the same leader who has used chemical weapons against his own countrymen and who has threatened, on more than one occasion, to use his arsenal of non-conventional weapons against my country.

(Mr. Levy, Israel)

Mr. President, as we gather here today, beginning a new year of work on disarmament, we should reflect on the true purpose of our work. Disarmament is a fragile and indispensable tool in our hands and in the hands of our leaders, whose mission is to ensure the security and well-being of their fellow citizens, without relying merely on a build-up of arms. Shaping a new world free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is a noble and indispensable goal. Let us all live up to this great responsibility.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Israel for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the next speaker on my list, the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. SANDERS (Netherlands): Mr. President, dear colleagues, the international community is challenged by the growing risks of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of their means of delivery, in particular ballistic missiles.

To address the rapidly growing problem of ballistic missile proliferation, an international code of conduct against ballistic missile proliferation was initiated. This code was inaugurated at the launching conference of the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, held in The Hague on 25 and 26 November 2002.

At the launching conference, 93 countries from all regions subscribed to the Code. The launching conference was attended by 78 delegations from subscribing States. A representative from the United Nations also attended the launching ceremony. Currently, the number of subscribing States to the Code stands at 101.

The Code provides for a series of transparency and confidence-building measures to alleviate mistrust and insecurity about the use of missile technology.

The Code reflects the outcome of broad-based consultations and represents the widest possible common ground. The Code has already achieved its two main purposes: to establish certain fundamental principles regarding missiles where previously there were none; and to set up a framework for further work.

At their first meeting on 26 November last year, the subscribing States decided that the chairmanship of the Code would be filled on a rotational basis, taking into account geographical distribution. The Netherlands was appointed to serve as the first Chair of the Code until the next regular meeting of subscribing States, which will take place in the autumn of 2003.

Furthermore, the subscribing States to the Code appointed Austria as the immediate central contact for collecting and disseminating submissions relating to confidence-building measures, receiving and announcing the subscription of additional States, and other tasks as may be agreed by the subscribing States.

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

Considering the number of complex issues to be elaborated under the Code, it was also decided to have an ad hoc technical intersessional meeting, open to all subscribing States. This meeting will be held in the first half of 2003, to elaborate a number of issues regarding the implementation of the Code, including confidence-building measures. One of the challenges ahead is the further elaboration of confidence-building measures as provided for in the Code, in order to ensure that the Code is effective in enhancing transparency in the field of ballistic missiles.

The Code is open for further subscription. Once countries subscribe, they can participate in the further development of the Code.

We hope that the Code will grow and provide the basis for further work to combat the proliferation of ballistic missiles. The Code has been sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for distribution, as well as to other relevant international and regional organizations. I will be sending the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, as well as the list of subscribing States, to the Secretary-General of this Conference and will request him to circulate these documents as an official document of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Netherlands for his statement and for his kind words. I now give the floor to the representative of Austria, Ambassador Petritsch, who will speak on behalf of the Human Security Network.

Mr. PETRITSCH (Austria): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I am taking the floor in the session, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency. I have been very impressed by the manner in which you have exercised your responsibility at this very crucial point in time. Needless to say, my delegation fully supports your endeavours to get the Conference out of its sad current state of affairs. In this context, I would like to stress again, for the record, Austria's support for the proposal by the five ambassadors.

I have now the honour of taking the floor today on behalf of partners and observers of the Human Security Network, which is currently chaired by Austria.

On 12 September 2002, the ministers for foreign affairs of the Human Security Network, during their meeting in New York, adopted the following declaration on promoting the universalization of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction:

“We, the partners and observers in the Human Security Network, Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa, Switzerland and Thailand, remain strongly committed to further strengthening the humanitarian norm that has been established by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

and on Their Destruction. This Convention was born out of the determination to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines that kill or maim innocent and defenceless people, obstruct economic development and reconstruction, inhibit the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons and have other severe consequences many years after emplacement. The Convention has set an international humanitarian norm that is working beyond its membership.

“We stress our conviction that no conceivable military utility of anti-personnel mines could possibly outweigh and justify the devastating humanitarian costs of these weapons.

“We emphasize therefore the desirability of attracting the adherence of all those States that are not yet formally bound by the Convention and are determined to work strenuously towards the promotion of universalization of the Convention.

“In this context, we welcome the recent ratification of the Convention by Chile, a partner in the Human Security Network, and ratification of or accession to the Convention by Algeria, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Nigeria and Suriname.

“In addition, we are also encouraged by the steps taken by other States to be formally bound by the Convention, including Greece, a partner in the Human Security Network, and Turkey, as well as Afghanistan.”

I have requested the secretariat to circulate this declaration as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

Since this Convention is a dynamic and well functioning legally binding framework to address the terrible problems caused by anti-personnel mines, the five months that have passed since the adoption of this declaration have seen a further increase in the number of States parties. Since September 2002, the following States have acceded to or ratified the Convention: Afghanistan, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, the Gambia and Cyprus.

That brings the number of States that have declared their will to be formally bound by the Convention to 131. Only three and a half years after the entry into force of the Convention, this is a truly remarkable achievement and a clear demonstration that the Convention has established an international humanitarian norm.

On behalf of the partners and observers of the Human Security Network, I would therefore like to urge those States that are not yet formally bound by the Convention, and in particular those that are members of the Conference on Disarmament, to accede to the Convention as soon as possible and, until they do so, to abide by the norm which it lays down.

(Mr. Petritsch, Austria)

Let me also use this opportunity, in my capacity as Co-Chair of the Standing Committee of Experts on the General Status and Operation of the Convention, to remind all of you that the first working week of the intersessional programme of work will take place next week in the premises of the World Meteorological Organization, and I would like to encourage you all to participate in this work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Austria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ambassador Alborzi, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. ALBORZI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, given your well-known expertise and your diplomatic skills, I am pleased to congratulate you on your assumption and conduct of the presidency. You may count on my delegation's support and may rest assured of its trust and cooperation in the performance of your duties.

As the Coordinator of the Group of 21, I would now like to read out a statement on behalf of the Group:

“The Group of 21 expresses its satisfaction that the Conference has adopted its agenda for the 2003 session. This session of the Conference on Disarmament commences its work against a backdrop of serious and multifarious challenges facing the international community in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation in all its aspects and international security, particularly the attempts to justify the perspective of the indefinite possession of nuclear arsenals, related concepts of nuclear deterrence, including a revised strategic framework, and elements aimed at opening more scope for possible use or threat of the use of force.

“The Group stresses that, as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, the Conference's programme of work should be responsive to these challenges and to the interests and priorities of all its members in the aspirations of the international community in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation in all its aspects, and international peace and security. The Group expresses its concern that the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to take up substantive work on the basis of an agreed programme of work since 1999, in spite of the demonstrated flexibility shown by the Group and the number of formal and informal proposals introduced by some of its members during their presidencies of the Conference, namely the Rodríguez Cedeño proposal, the Dembri proposal, the Amorim proposal and the latest proposal, known as the ‘five ambassadors’ initiative’. The Group reaffirms its readiness to participate constructively in all efforts aimed at reaching agreement on a programme of work which is comprehensive and reflects the priorities of all the member States of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Alborzi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

“In this context, the Group reaffirms its proposal, as contained in documents CD/1570 and CD/1571, on the programme of work and a draft decision and mandate for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

“The Group emphasizes that nuclear disarmament remains, as before, the highest priority for the Conference on Disarmament. It stresses the importance of the elimination of the possibility of nuclear war, the threats to humanity derived from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the possible use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. It underscores the need to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons and emphasizes, in this regard, the urgent need to commence negotiations without delay.

“The Group further expresses its serious concern about the lack of expected progress following the unequivocal undertaking by nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, made during the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

“The Group has already expressed, in document CD/1549 of 12 August 1998, its position with regard to the establishment of an ad hoc committee under agenda item 1, entitled ‘Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament’, which shall negotiate on the basis of the report of the special coordinator (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein, a non-discriminatory, multilateral, internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

“The prevention of an arms race in outer space has assumed greater urgency because of legitimate concerns that existing legal instruments are inadequate to deter imminent attempts at the further militarization of outer space. The abrogation of the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM) brings new challenges in this issue. In accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 57/57 of 22 November 2002, the Group emphasizes the urgent need for the commencement of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

“While various approaches exist, the Group expresses its conviction that efforts to conclude a universal and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued.

“The Group welcomes the report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the issue of missiles in all its aspects (A/57/229) and notes the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/71 of 22 November 2002, requesting the Secretary-General, with the assistance of a panel of governmental experts, to explore further the issue of missiles in all its aspects and to submit a report for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. The Group is convinced of the need for a multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory approach towards the issue of missiles

(Mr. Alborzi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

in all its aspects as a contribution to international peace and security. Pending the achievement of such a universal mechanism related to delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction, any initiative to address these concerns effectively and in a sustainable and comprehensive manner should be undertaken through an inclusive process of negotiations in a forum where all States can participate as equals. In this context, the Group emphasizes the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.

“Having in mind the context of the Conference on Disarmament, the Group is deeply concerned about the progressive erosion of multilateralism and emphasizes the importance of collective international efforts to enhance and maintain international peace and security. This can be best addressed through multilaterally negotiated non-discriminatory disarmament and non-proliferation treaties. The Group highlights the objectives laid down in General Assembly resolution 57/63 of 22 November 2002, entitled ‘Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation’, which, among other things, reaffirms multilateralism as the core principle in negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, with a view to maintaining and strengthening universal norms and enlarging their scope, and also reaffirms multilateralism as the core principle in resolving disarmament and non-proliferation concerns.

“The Group hopes that the Conference will commence early substantive work during the 2003 annual session and, to this end, affirms its readiness to participate constructively in all efforts aimed at reaching agreement on the programme of work. The Group urges other groups to display matching flexibility and calls upon the President of the Conference to intensify efforts aimed at finding agreement on a programme of work, so that the substantive work of the Conference can commence without delay, in accordance with the rules of procedure.”

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Belgium, Ambassador Lint.

Mr. LINT (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, as President of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines I have been entrusted with the task of undertaking informal consultations on the preparatory process leading to the Review Conference in 2004. In December 2002 I sent a letter to all diplomatic missions inviting them to the first consultative meeting, which will take place tomorrow on Friday, 31 January. I would like to clarify that the meeting will not be held in room XXIV, as stated in the letter, but in room XXII. You are all invited and welcome to attend the meeting.

While on the subject of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, I cannot conclude my statement without expressing my thanks to my South African friend, Mr. Tom Markram, who will be leaving us tomorrow. I would like to thank him for the excellent

(Mr. Lint, Belgium)

cooperation that I have enjoyed with him over the past three years in the area of anti-personnel mines. I am sure that everyone who has worked with him will join with me in wishing Mr. Makram all the best in his future work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Belgium for his statement and for his kind words. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Venezuela, Mr. William Santana.

Mr. SANTANA (Venezuela) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, first of all, allow me to thank you for the excellent way in which you are guiding our work and also to express the support of my delegation for your praiseworthy efforts.

Briefly, Mr. President, allow me also to express the support of my delegation for the initiative which has been submitted by the five ambassadors, Mr. Dembri, Mr. Lint, Mr. Vega, Mr. Reyes and Mr. Salander, concerning a programme of work for this Conference. This support is based on various considerations and I will just mention two of them.

First of all, the undeniable merit of this proposal is that it offers a balanced approach to the aspirations of the members of the Conference to come up with a programme of work which will help us to complete our work in a satisfactory way.

Second, this proposal is recognition of the commendable efforts which have already been and which continue to be undertaken by the authors of the proposal, and in particular of the flexible approach which is reflected in the document which they have prepared. I encourage the other members of the Conference to take the same view of these positive endeavours and themselves to make the necessary contribution, so that this year we can finally embark, in a constructive spirit, on the work for which we have responsibility.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Venezuela for his statement and for his kind words. I now call upon the distinguished representative of Ecuador, Mr. Paredes.

Mr. PAREDES (Ecuador) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, as this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor during your presidency I wish to convey to you our great satisfaction to see you preside over this session of the Conference on Disarmament. Your skills and qualities assure us that the business of this forum is in very good hands as we seek to achieve the objectives and aspirations that all members hope to attain. May I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in any matter that may be of help to you as you seek to carry out your difficult tasks.

As on previous occasions, my delegation would like, at the very outset, to reiterate our deep concern at the stagnation in this Conference. For a country such as Ecuador and a people such as ours, it is deeply discouraging to see that this forum, which is called upon to play the

(Mr. Paredes, Ecuador)

vitally important role of agreeing on appropriate norms and control mechanisms to shore up international peace and security, has proved unable, for a number of years on end, to agree on a programme of work to enable it to carry out its proposed agenda.

The international conditions prevailing in today's world and the pressing economic situation facing many sectors of society call for urgent efforts in pursuit of our set objective of attaining disarmament agreements that will dispel the shadow of destruction from all parts of the world, the sort of destruction that could result from the use of weapons of mass destruction.

In the framework of this Conference, as noted in the statement made by the delegation of Iran on behalf of the Group of 21, countless efforts have been made and proposals put forward, on the initiative of this group of countries, with a view to providing the necessary elements to attain the consensus that would enable this forum to adopt a programme of work and thereby to embark on its actual duties. This would undoubtedly open up new hopes for the world and provide elements that would strengthen peace among peoples. This statement also reiterated the Group's full commitment to the multilateral disarmament system as a flexible, balanced and comprehensive way of achieving progress in the area of disarmament. This confidence in the multilateral system has been reaffirmed by the United Nations General Assembly and it is the duty of this Conference to ensure that the system is made fully effective.

Among the efforts made to overcome the difficulties facing the Conference, my delegation would like to underscore the important and timely draft put forward by the group of five ambassadors, all former presidents of the Conference, several of whom hail from the region to which my country belongs. This effort is based on an earlier draft submitted by Ambassador Celso Amorim of Brazil, which my delegation also supported, and it has a great many merits that should be endorsed and supported by members of this forum. As its authors have indicated, this draft still has room for improvement. It is so designed that if any members believe that any of its elements could be used further to improve the draft, these can be developed so as to ensure that it serves their interests - and, of course, the interests of the Conference at large - to the fullest possible extent.

Delegations that are interested in making such improvements are entirely at liberty to do so and to bring up points that they think might help in this task. The particular merits of this draft, which, furthermore, is based on another draft that came close to achieving agreement, mean that it represents an exceptional opportunity that should not be wasted. Furthermore, it will enable us to display the political will that is indispensable if the draft is to acquire a definitive shape.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its support for the draft, which has been put before us at a very opportune time, at the start of the current session, and we appeal to all the main parties concerned to ensure that this potential programme of work has every possible chance of bringing our forum out of its stalemate and of enabling it to play its assigned and essential role in the attainment of world peace.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Ecuador for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now recognize the distinguished Ambassador of Iraq, Ambassador Al-Nima.

Mr. AL-NIMA (Iraq) (translated from Arabic): In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

Mr. President, as this is the first time I have taken the floor before this august assembly, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of this Conference. I should also like to assure you of my delegation's willingness to cooperate with you in seeking to achieve the results which this Conference is working towards.

I am making this statement in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made by the Ambassador of Israel.

We Arabs have a well-known saying which goes as follows: "If you are shameless, do whatever you want." This proverb is used in reference to people who make demands on everybody but themselves; people who expect from others what they themselves are not prepared to give. The statement by the Ambassador of Israel is a case in point. The Ambassador presented a number of untruths, which we have become used to hearing in successive meetings. He spoke of his faith in the goals of the Conference and yet the international community has not seen Israel take any tangible steps to disarm or to subject its nuclear facilities to international monitoring, even though Israel does have nuclear weapons.

Israel has signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, but it has not ratified it. So, no one knows what stocks it has. It also has a stock of biological weapons and their means of delivery. Although it is Israel that is responsible for the arms race in the Middle East, the Ambassador of Israel claims to have faith in the goals of disarmament, and says that he wants to rid the region of weapons of mass destruction and bring a halt to the arms race.

Paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) calls for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. We have yet to see Israel take any practical steps towards that end.

The representative of Israel complains that his country has been subjected to acts of terrorism, ignoring the fact that it is occupying territory belonging to others. It has built illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, and is killing civilians and children, dismantling farms, destroying houses, closing roads and imposing collective punishment on defenceless people. Whenever these people resist the occupation, it calls them terrorists and expects us to believe its claims that its intentions are pacific, yet it makes no secret of its expansionist ambitions to annex by force territory owned by others, and this in contravention of United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. As for evidence of Israeli practices against Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory, one need only look at

(Mr. Al-Nima, Iraq)

the resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights at its most recent session. Do Israeli practices against Palestinian civilians not violate the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention? Do these people not have a right to defend themselves against the occupation? What should we call Israeli practices? Are they not acts of terrorism?

In his statement, the representative of Israel referred to my country without mentioning its name. We have no wish to get into a slanging match on this subject, but Israel makes no secret of its hostile intentions towards my country and is forever trying to provoke a war against my country. The representative of Israel makes accusations about the leader of my country, but we should remember that the leader of his own country is wanted on charges of war crimes and that a lawsuit has been brought against him in Belgium. There is also evidence to show that he was involved in the massacres at Sabra and Shatila in 1982.

In conclusion, I should like to give a message to the representative of Israel: If your house is made of glass, don't throw stones.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Iraq for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now recognize the distinguished representative of Peru, Ambassador Voto Bernales.

Mr. VOTO BERNALES (Peru) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time under your presidency, I would like first of all to extend to you my most sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation is very pleased to see you presiding over our work in this, the world's sole multilateral disarmament forum, and we wish to assure you of our full support and cooperation.

I have asked for the floor to convey my delegation's view that the proposal for a programme of work put forward by the five ambassadors, former presidents of this Conference, sets before us, in a realistic manner, a reasonable and essentially balanced programme of work and we are therefore able to give it our support. We believe that this proposal has the merit of being sufficiently flexible and pragmatic to function as a programme of work.

My delegation previously expressed its support for the Amorim proposal and would now like to restate that support for the present proposal, which, in our view, could lay the basis for a programme of work within this Conference. We therefore pledge our full support in working to attain that objective.

In expressing this support, my delegation reserves the right to expand further on its position regarding the entire agenda for the Conference on Disarmament in a general statement that our country will be making in the Conference on Disarmament in the near future

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Peru for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. Jang Chun Sik.

Mr. JANG Chun Sik (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, since I am taking the floor for the first time, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency during the first part of the Conference's 2003 session. I wish you every success in discharging your responsibilities, with the full cooperation of my delegation as well.

Now that the issue of my country's withdrawal from the NPT has been taken up today by the distinguished delegate from Argentina, I would like to mention our position in this regard. It is not my intention, however, to go into further detail here because the Conference on Disarmament is not the proper forum to debate this issue.

Our withdrawal from the NPT was in fact a self-defence measure in the face of the unfair, impartial and unilateral resolution adopted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which encroached upon our sovereignty and dignity. IAEA adopted a resolution against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 6 January of this year, in the wake of the similar resolution made on 29 November of last year, in which it treated us as a criminal and demanded us to scrap our so-called "nuclear programme" forthwith and in a verifiable manner.

I wish to take this opportunity to make clear once again that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea does not have the intention to produce nuclear weapons. This was made very clear by my Government when it had declared its decision to withdraw from the NPT. We can give proof of this through separate verification between my country and the United States.

The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is a bilateral issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. It could be solved through dialogue between the two countries. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is therefore strongly opposed to any attempt to internationalize the nuclear issue of the Korean peninsula, as it will not help solve the problem. If any country is really interested in seeing a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, it should not take a one-sided attitude and express its concern or urge us to reconsider our withdrawal, but should rather encourage dialogue and negotiation between the two parties. Before concluding, I would like to reiterate that any debate on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament is merely a waste of time.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Algeria, Ambassador Dembri.

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) (translated from French): Mr. President, I would like to take the floor to follow on from the statements made by my colleagues from Israel and Iraq. I am doing this not only as the representative of an African country, but also as that of an Arab country represented here in the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like my statement to be understood as free of any polemic elements but, since we are in the Conference on Disarmament, I must admit to a certain measure of sadness. Our distinguished colleague from Israel, who knows my position well, should have come before us today with a very strong statement, announcing, for example, that his country had decided to

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

submit the nuclear installations of Dimona for inspection by IAEA. That would have boosted the prospects of peace in the Middle East. I would also have liked our colleague from Israel to have announced that his country was going to comply strictly with the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. It would appear that this has not been the case; I can only hope that this information will be forthcoming in his next statement and then the chances for peace in the long-suffering Middle East will be more promising.

We all condemn terrorism. It is the scourge of the third millennium and Algeria, which has long suffered from terrorism, long before most other countries, long before 11 September and often in the face of universal indifference, has a well-earned entitlement to declare its condemnation. I believe that, whenever there is a civilian victim in the Middle East, whether Palestinian or Israeli, we are all affected. We should espouse this as a universal truth and I would also like to point out that these are not simply positions taken by States, but the positions of entire communities of States. The Arab League has condemned terrorism; the Organization of the Islamic Conference has likewise condemned terrorism. And if it is a question of assigning responsibilities, as has been said, in the statement by Mr. Yaakov Levy, I recommend that he read the memoirs of a former minister of foreign affairs of Israel, Mr. Moshe Sharett, who says quite simply that the Israelis were heavily involved in the financing and training of Hamas. This is historical reality and cannot simply be erased. When we talk about responsibility we should be very clear.

I would like to offer a few other examples which show that we are not simply here to reproach one another for facts that have now gone down in history but rather to work on the basis of peaceful dialogue in endeavouring to build international peace and security together.

I would like to recall, since I am also the representative of an African country, that the infamous Dr. Wouter Basson of South Africa, who came up with an unprecedented plan to get rid of the black race in Africa, then found refuge in Israel. This took place in the 1980s and it should not be forgotten. I believe that this remains unrefuted but let us now try and look beyond these facts.

While on the subject of the chances for peace, let us consider what prospects there are today. There are such prospects. Thus, the Arab summit in Beirut came up with a peace offer and presented an unparalleled opportunity for peace. When will we hear any response to this programme, which, I should point out, has been welcomed by virtually the entire international community and, notably, the European Union, which reacted very favourably to the Beirut summit proposals?

I can also point out agreements that have been reached to establish peace on a sustainable basis, such as the Camp David accords of 1979 with Egypt and the 1994 agreement with Jordan. These are all very well and good, but there is still something that bothers me. It seems to me that this memory exercise is somewhat selective. Why was Oslo not included? Oslo marked an important stage in the peace process. Why did the Ambassador of Israel simply skim over Oslo?

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

Does this mean that no one in his country is complying any longer with the Oslo accords? If we look at things from this perspective, if we want to be borne along on this current of consolidating peace and creating nuclear-free zones in the Middle East, as have been achieved in Africa and Latin America, then I believe that we should also take on board the proposals of people who, in my view, have acted as a moral conscience. Among them I would mention the senior official, Robert Mallett, in the United States, who, in his public statements and writings, has always spelled out the real issues underlying the negotiations between Palestine and Israel. I would equally place my trust in those advocates of dialogue such as the Israeli writer David Grossman, who has also mapped out the contours of a future fraternal relationship between Palestinians and Israelis. This is because, when all is said and done, it is not Israel that is threatened today - at least, not in our eyes: it is Palestine.

We would like to know when Israel will finally bring its borders into line with international agreements? When will it stop its daily violations of the security of the Palestinian people and their property? Our conscience - and not just the Arab conscience or the Muslim conscience, but the conscience of many of us throughout the international community - is deeply troubled, Mr. Ambassador of Israel, by these very strong images, not only of people dying in your country, but also of little Mohammed Al-Dura, who was killed with his father and pictures of whom appeared in the mass media all over the world. In addition, there are images of people buried under the debris while tanks leave destruction in their wake. I think we will all retain the images of the Israeli soldiers crushing the limbs of Palestinians with rocks. These are the sort of images we do not want to see any more, the repetitions of Kristallnacht that we hope never again to encounter. If we want to build peace then we must listen to the message of peace.

We would like to recall again that the proposal of the Beirut Arab summit is still awaiting a response so that we can move forward and, of course, we are also waiting for your country to submit itself to the IAEA inspections, as required of all other countries in the world, including those which have already renounced nuclear weapons, and for it to give its undertaking to comply strictly with the Security Council resolutions. When that day comes, we will have made a great step forward, and I hope that that will be the tenor of your next statement.

Once again, Mr. President, I would like to insist that there is nothing political about all this. I am not exercising any right of reply, I am simply trying to shed light on a situation which is of concern to all of us and today the Ambassador of Israel has given us an opportunity to break the vow of silence that so often seems to be imposed on the issue of Israel's nuclear potential. I think that we should bring all these problems out into the open and I would like to thank him at least for having done that today, because otherwise we might have read quite the opposite meaning in his statement.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria for his statement and for his kind words and I now call upon the distinguished representative of Israel, Ambassador Levy.

Mr. LEVY (Israel): Mr. President, just a very brief reaction. The statement which I made, I think, speaks for itself in outlining Israel's views and policies in relation to the work of the Conference. There are sufficient political forums in the United Nations to debate either the wild accusations which the Iraqi Ambassador launched or the measured considerations which my colleague, the distinguished Ambassador Dembri of Algeria, presented to us.

I do not think that these polemics should be introduced into this forum. I think it would be inappropriate, even though I, like Ambassador Dembri, could draw on many images of victims of terrorism and belabour the point to a great degree and, I believe, with similar emotion and emphasis. I would just like to say to Ambassador Dembri that I am party to what I discern as the genuine motives behind your statement - to peace in the Middle East - and, when illustrating in my speech the peace accords signed so far between Egypt and Israel and between Jordan and Israel, I expressed my hope that beyond a general declaration of principle, which was the Oslo accords, which as you indeed pointed out has been abrogated by one party, the Palestinian Authority, that we would like indeed to reach those agreements with the other neighbouring countries, including, as you stated, recognition of borders. We would very much like our borders to be recognized through negotiations by our neighbours, and to see an end to the mutual threats and terrorism.

But again, these issues are more for the political forums of the United Nations, and I recommend that - as I at least shall do in my statements and I hope that others from the region will do likewise - we stick to the issues at hand and again, my statement here speaks for itself.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Israel for his statement and now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the United States, Mr. McGinnis.

Mr. McGINNIS (United States of America): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I have addressed the plenary under your presidency, please allow me, at the outset of my remarks, to express my congratulations to you on your assumption of these duties. This is an important time for this body. We cannot ask for a more capable, even-handed, effective leader and colleague than you, and you can count on the full support of our delegation as you go forward with your work.

In response to the remarks of our distinguished colleague and representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I would like to underscore that the withdrawal by that country from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is not solely a bilateral matter between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons is a threat to the peace and stability of north-east Asia and to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, but particularly the NPT and IAEA. As such, it is of deep concern to the entire international community. We stand together with the international community in calling on North Korea verifiably and irreversibly to terminate its nuclear programme and to return to compliance with its international commitments. The United States is committed to pursuing this goal through diplomatic means. We welcome the statement today that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has no intention to produce nuclear weapons, and returning to the NPT would help reassure the entire international community of this.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the United States of America for his statement and also for the kind words addressed to the Chair, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ambassador Salloum.

Mr. SALLOUM (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, I should like to reaffirm our willingness to cooperate with you in order to achieve the desired outcome of this Conference and break the deadlock in its work. As if the problem of the deadlock were not enough, the Ambassador of Israel is only making things worse by talking about matters that have no place in this forum. We do not wish to exercise our right of reply, because we have no desire to get into an argument here, but we do need to clarify some points.

We Syrians, like all Arabs, condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We particularly condemn State terrorism; a form of terror in which Israel has distinguished itself. Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons poses a major threat both to its neighbours and to the region as a whole. Not only has it been shown to possess nuclear weapons, it also has the means to deliver them to countries in the Middle East. Moreover, it persists in refusing to open up its facilities for inspection.

The representative of Israel talks about the fact that his country has been subjected to terrorism. When I look at the text of his statement, it seems that he could be talking about what Israel itself is doing. Cross-border attacks, terrorist acts, hijacking: who does all these things? Let us begin from the beginning. Who killed Count Bernadotte? He was killed by the people currently governing Israel. Who attacked its neighbours? Let us start with a list. Israel attacked Egypt in 1956 and also occupied its territory. It attacked its Arab neighbours in 1967 and occupied territory belonging to virtually every one of the neighbouring States. It attacked Lebanon twice and occupied its territory. The Ambassador said that there have been attacks on civil aviation. Who attacked and brought down an Egyptian aircraft? Who attacked and downed an unarmed Libyan civil aircraft, killing all the passengers on board? As for cross-border kidnapping, Israeli mercenaries working for the Israeli authorities kidnapped Lebanese citizens, who are still being held hostage.

He says, and I quote: "young people ... have been committing the ultimate insanity of suicide bombings". Who is responsible for causing this insanity? How could a young person in the prime of youth fail to go mad when he sees Israeli soldiers coming into his home, beating up his family, forcing them out and then demolishing the house? How could a person avoid going mad when he sees Israeli soldiers seizing his brother's hand and pounding it with stones until it breaks? How could a person not go insane seeing Israel launch weapons of mass destruction and missiles from aircraft to bombard people's homes using Apache aircraft normally deployed in war to bomb civilian homes. Israel sent commandos to Beirut airport to blow up 10 civilian aircraft. It dispatched killers to Tunis to kill Palestinian leaders. It financed, equipped and managed the terrorist groups that carried out bombings in Egypt.

I am talking about history. All of this has been documented for everyone to see. The current Prime Minister of Israel was condemned by an Israeli Commission for his part in the massacre of civilians. Government officials and parliamentary representatives are talking about

(Mr. Salloum, Syrian Arab Republic)

a transfer policy. They forged close ties with the apartheid regime in South Africa. And yet, in spite of all of this, the Ambassador of Israel says that the reason for what is happening in the Middle East is that there is no peace. This is the only thing in his entire statement that is true.

Yes, our problem in the Middle East is that there is no peace. Why is there no peace in the Middle East? Because Israel rejected and continues to reject the joint peace initiative presented at the Arab summit in Beirut. If I wanted to say everything about the conventional, biological and chemical weapons being stockpiled by Israel, these meetings would not give me enough time. I should like to add my voice to that of the Ambassador of Algeria and say that this forum is devoted to discussing disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament. How happy I would be, if the Ambassador of Israel were to say that Israel had decided to open up its nuclear facilities for inspection. How pleased I would be, if the Ambassador of Israel were to confine his remarks to the substantive matters under consideration, so that we were not obliged to set the record straight. We hope that this forum will not be diverted from its path once more by allegations made by the representative of a State that continues to occupy land belonging to three countries in the region and that persists in refusing the hand of peace that is held out to it by its neighbours.

Mr. President, I shall not impose any further on this assembly's time. I hope that this discussion will end here.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. Jang Il Hun.

Mr. JANG Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the chance to take the floor. I also have to thank the distinguished representative of the United States for giving me a chance to respond. He said that our withdrawal from the NPT is an international issue, but we see it otherwise. Our withdrawal from the NPT was prompted by the hostile policy of the United States against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, so we see that this problem should be solved through bilateral negotiations. The assertion that the nuclear issue of our country is an international issue is an attempt on the part of the United States to shirk its responsibility for creating the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula by setting our country against the international community. No other country in the international community poses such a threat to our country as the United States. Our withdrawal from the NPT will pose no threat to peace and stability of the region while the sovereignty and right to peaceful existence of our country are respected. This is the basic requirement for any sovereign State.

Our withdrawal from the NPT was taken against the backdrop that the United States stepped up its hostile policy and brought increased pressure to bear upon us, so under these circumstances, we also asked for the signing of the non-aggression treaty. The United States has said, time and again, that it does not intend to attack the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and we want these words put into action, in a verifiable manner. That is why we propose the

(Mr. Jang Il Hun, Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

signing of a non-aggression treaty with the United States, given that the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula and other issues resulting therefrom have been created by the United States' policy to stifle and isolate our country. These problems can only be solved once the United States comes up with a bold attitude for dialogue and negotiation with our country.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and now call upon the distinguished representative of Israel, Ambassador Levy.

Mr. LEVY (Israel): Mr. President, it is really not my wish for us to go yet again into polemics on the issue of the Middle East; there are substantial forums for the discussion of this issue. I will therefore refrain from recounting at length the historical books and other sources setting out the record of Syrian aggression. I believe that would be unproductive.

I admit I am also at a disadvantage here because I am unable to quote from the record of public commissions of inquiry conducted in Damascus against atrocities committed by the regime and its leaders, against its own citizens, citizens of Lebanon and other neighbouring countries, for reasons which you will clearly appreciate.

I would like, however, briefly to read you 10 names and to ask a question at the end. The names are those of the 10 major terrorist organizations currently stationed with their headquarters in Damascus with their leaders: The first is the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, headed by Ahmed Sadat; the second organization is the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, headed by Naif Hawatmeh; the third is the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command, headed by Ahmad Jibril; the fourth is the Palestine Liberation Front, headed by Muhammad Abbas, known as Abu al-Abbas; the fifth is the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front, headed by Samir Gosheh, and the Damascus branch is headed by Khalad 'Avar El-Majid; the sixth is the Vanguard of the Popular War of Liberation, headed by 'Isam al-Qadi, also in Damascus; the seventh is the Fatah Intifada, headed by Sa'id Musa Marais, known as Abu Musa; the eighth is the Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, headed by Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, who is stationed in Gaza but with headquarters in Damascus; the ninth is the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, headed by Ramadan Shallah; and the tenth is the Communist Revolutionary Party, headed by Arabi Uwad.

I would suggest that it would be a pleasure for us in this Conference on Disarmament, rather than listen to speeches, as eloquent as they might be, by the distinguished Syrian Ambassador, to hear that his Government was taking action, first, to close these offices which conduct and perpetrate terrorism and, second, to arrest the heads of these organizations whom I have named here. Everyone in authority in Damascus knows exactly their location, their phone numbers and their addresses. I submit that this would be much more productive than any speech, however eloquent.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Israel for his statement and I now recognize the distinguished Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. SALLOUM (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, we had hoped to avoid this dangerous detour along which we are being dragged by the representative of Israel. We wanted this forum to discuss disarmament, and particularly nuclear disarmament. Perhaps the Ambassador of Israel wants to avoid mentioning Israel's nuclear arsenal, so that he does not have to say whether his Government is willing to open its nuclear facilities for inspection or not. This is the subject that we would like to discuss; not these other matters.

As usual, however, he has completely distorted the facts. I would like to correct what he said. The Palestinians whom he mentioned are in Damascus, because Israel is occupying Palestine. If a Palestinian State existed, they would not be obliged to live in Damascus. These people represent Palestinian information offices that provide information about the justice of the Palestinian question and the right of Palestinians to an independent State and to self-determination, as guaranteed under international law and United Nations resolutions. I do want to say, however, that all they are doing in Damascus is disseminating information on the Palestinian question and this is a legitimate right. Second, who says that these people represent, are members of, or that these are terrorist organizations. I can give dozens of examples of people who were called terrorists and were later recognized as freedom fighters, who became leaders of their own country. Nelson Mandela is one example. Israel supported the regime which put him in prison for being a terrorist.

I would like to concentrate on the reasons for the establishment of this Conference, particularly the goal of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and the fact that the presence of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery in Israel prevents us from realizing that goal. The main danger facing Israel is the policy pursued by its leaders. The Palestinians whose bones Israel is breaking every day, whose homes it demolishes and whose lives it takes, greeted Israeli soldiers with roses when they thought there was a chance for peace. I would like to remind people that the reason why the peace agreement was signed between the Palestinians and the Israelis was to establish an independent State within five years. It is Israel that has stopped this from happening. The current Prime Minister of Israel sparked off the recent violence by making a provocative visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, knowing full well what would happen afterwards. He used the visit for electoral purposes, hoping to embarrass the then labour Prime Minister. He knew perfectly well what the consequences of his visit would be. He did what he did to sabotage the peace process, which he had publicly rejected. He undertook that visit because he wanted to provoke everybody and to enrage the Palestinians.

I will not dwell on Israeli internal politics, but there are many people who accuse the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of having inspired the killer of Yitzhak Rabin. They inspired Rabin's killer, who was an Israeli, not an Arab. The people who killed Rabin at that time, are killing the peace process, and they are killing Palestinians on the streets today. I do not want to dwell on this subject, here, however - this is not the right forum.

Let us go back to Israel's nuclear weapons. Does the Israeli Government have any intention of opening up its facilities for inspection? Does Israel intend to ensure that the region becomes a nuclear-weapon-free zone? I do not want to hear talk about conventional weapons.

(Mr. Salloum, Syrian Arab Republic)

We will think about that, if there is peace, because peace is a possibility. We have an Arab initiative. The Ambassador of Israel need only declare, on behalf of his Government, that they are willing to accept this initiative, and I guarantee that there will be peace before the end of the current year. I asked the same question during the most recent session of the Commission on Human Rights, but I have yet to receive a response. His Government did not give a direct answer, but it did respond indirectly by preventing the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her delegation from visiting the territories to investigate the flagrant violations of human rights perpetrated by Israel. At the time, the representative of Israel was acting as Israel's ambassador to the Commission on Human Rights. He himself told the High Commissioner for Human Rights that he could not allow her to go into the occupied territories. So, let us return to the subject of this Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, and particularly to the subject of Israeli nuclear weapons.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement and now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Chung.

Mr. CHUNG (Republic of Korea): First of all, since this is my first opportunity to take the floor under your presidency, let me, on behalf of my delegation, express our congratulations on your assumption of that office. My delegation believes that, under your able leadership, this session of the Conference will produce substantial progress and I assure you of my delegation's fullest support.

My delegation is also of the view that the Conference on Disarmament is not an appropriate forum to explore possible solutions to the recent development of events with regard to North Korea's decision to withdraw from the NPT. It is therefore with great regret that I have to respond to the statements made by the distinguished delegation from North Korea. We regard the recent steps taken by North Korea as unacceptable and a serious violation of its obligations under international agreements and thus a global concern - not just a bilateral issue between the United States and North Korea. In addition, those steps pose not only a threat to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and beyond, but also a challenge to the integrity of the global non-proliferation regime.

We reiterate our firm commitment to the establishment of a denuclearized Korean peninsula, to which North Korea also committed itself. In pursuit of this objective, we call upon North Korea to retract its decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, completely to dismantle its nuclear weapons programme and to come into full compliance with the safeguards agreement with IAEA, including the immediate re-establishment of the containment and surveillance system and the return of IAEA inspectors.

In this regard, we also take note that the 6 January resolution of IAEA, which called for prompt and full compliance by North Korea with this nuclear compliance, was adopted by consensus of the 45 members of the Board of Governors, who were elected by the international community.

(Mr. Chung, Republic of Korea)

My delegation welcomes the statement by the North Korean delegation made today that North Korea, indeed, does not have the intention to produce nuclear weapons; we also welcome constructive initiatives seeking a peaceful resolution of peace issues and once again urge North Korea to respond to these initiatives in a positive and prompt manner.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Israel, Ambassador Levy.

Mr. LEVY (Israel): Mr. President, as I stated earlier, I have no wish to belabour the points and answer at great length. I would just like to remind the distinguished Syrian Ambassador this is not the Commission on Human Rights, which he cited. There is ample space during six weeks of the Commission on Human Rights to exchange barbs and accusations, mostly falsely where he is concerned. I repeat that my statement regarding the issues on the table here speaks for itself. I would offer, however, one observation. The distinguished Ambassador of Syria referred to the Israeli political and electoral system and alluded to what, in his view, motivates leaders and candidates and office-holders in Israel, mostly in an erroneous manner. I would like to state, however, that the electoral and political process in Israel is free and democratic. I would recommend its introduction in the country which the distinguished Ambassador represents. It might prove a rather innovative and rewarding process.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Israel for his statement and now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr Jang Il Hun.

Mr. JANG Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, in response to the statement made by the distinguished delegate of South Korea, I am taking the floor again.

The withdrawal of our country from the NPT is an exercise of our right under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Now that we have withdrawn from the NPT, we are not a member and it is quite wrong for anyone to require us to adhere to compliance with its provisions. Instead of asking my country to retreat from or reverse its decision to withdraw from the NPT, I hope that the South Korean President will ask the United States to withdraw all its nuclear weapons from its land, so that the Korean peninsula can be turned into a nuclear-free zone. In this regard, therefore, I also ask the South Korean President fully to cooperate with my country, as one nation, in implementing all the agreements reached between both sides, including the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, rather than siding with the United States.

As for our withdrawal from the NPT, I think it is wise to ask IAEA why it prompted us to withdraw, rather than asking us to reconsider and reverse our decision.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Japan, Ambassador Inoguchi.

Ms. INOBUCHI (Japan): Since this is the first time for me to take the floor under your presidency in the plenary, I would like to express my full confidence in your skilful guidance, and to assure you of the full support of my delegation for your chairmanship.

The basic position of my Government is that it shares the view of the United States, expressed by the distinguished representative of the United States this morning on the issue of security in east Asia, but I agree with all members of the Conference on Disarmament, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, that the Conference is not the most appropriate forum to discuss this issue.

As a member of the Conference on Disarmament from east Asia, I share the views of other members of the Conference that we are all committed to solving the problem in east Asia through dialogue and peaceful means.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Japan for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ambassador Salloum.

Mr. SALLOUM (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, I would just like to clarify something. I was not talking about the political regime in Israel nor about Israeli elections. I was talking about the Israeli Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, not the electoral system. These two persons are believed to have inspired Mr. Rabin's killer with their ideas. I am not making this up. This is what we hear from Israeli circles. I should also like to remind people that Mr. Rabin's widow herself alluded to this matter. As for their elections and the way they choose to manage their own affairs, this is a matter for them to decide and has nothing to do with us.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement and give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. Jang Chun Sik.

Mr. JANG Chun Sik (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like to respond very briefly to the statement by the distinguished representative of Japan.

As we have clarified on several occasions, the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is a matter between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. That is why no one can solve this issue as long as the hostile policy of the United States remains unchanged. I should therefore like to put one question to the Japanese delegation. In the view of Japan, can you see this issue solved, with the hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remaining as it is? Never.

As you mentioned in your statement, the Conference on Disarmament is not the right place to discuss this issue. I call upon all the members of the Conference to ask both sides to sit together to find a peaceful solution to the issue on the Korean peninsula, if they are really interested in solving the issue.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Israel, Ambassador Levy.

Mr. LEVY (Israel): Mr. President, I would just like to state for the record that the current accusation made by the distinguished Ambassador of Syria and the others made earlier are false.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Israel for his statement and give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Sweden, Ambassador Salander.

Mr. SALANDER (Sweden): Mr. President, may I make a brief intervention in my capacity as the current Chair of the Preparatory Committee of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and correct an erroneous statement by the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In the next to the last intervention by that delegation, he said that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not a member of the Treaty. That is not correct. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is still a State party to the NPT.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Sweden for his statement and give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. Jang Chun Sik.

Mr. JANG Chun Sik (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, now that the Swedish representative has raised the question of the issue of the NPT, I would like to make it clear that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is no longer a member of the NPT. On 10 January this year, my Government declared its decision to withdraw from the NPT. Our declaration will enter into force immediately. Allow me to recall that in 1993, on 12 March, my Government declared its decision to withdraw from the NPT in the face of the hostile policy of the United States and the unreasonable resolution adopted by IAEA. But in June of that same year, a bilateral statement was issued and discussions held between my country and the United States. In the joint statement adopted in June 1993 we declared to suspend the effectuation of the withdrawal from the NPT. Accordingly, as set out in the joint statement, we maintained the suspension - by which I mean the temporary suspension of the effectuation of the NPT. At that time, one day remained before the withdrawal from the NPT was due to enter into effect. Thus, on 10 January this year, we declared very clearly that our effectuation would enter into force immediately - in other words, with effect from the following day, 11 January. In this regard, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Director-General of the Atomic General Bureau of my country sent a letter of notification of the effectuation of the withdrawal from the NPT both to the President of the United Nations Security Council and also to the Director-General of IAEA. Our withdrawal from the NPT has therefore already entered into force.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement and I recognize the distinguished representative of Japan, Ambassador Inoguchi.

Ms. INOBUCHI (Japan): Mr. President, I would like to make a brief comment regarding the question raised by the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. As I understand it, I believe that the United States is seeking dialogue and a peaceful solution to the issue.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Japan for her statement and I recognize the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. Jang Chun Sik.

Mr. JANG Chun Sik (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I do apologize for taking the floor several times, but you see the statement made by the representative of Japan forces me to reply.

The peaceful solution decided by the United States does not represent a real solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. The United States has said several times that it wants to talk, but it wants negotiations for a solution of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula before the Democratic People's Republic of Korea can put its nuclear programme into operation. This means that the United States is asking us to make the first move. This first move is to disarm ourselves. With an empty hand, we cannot negotiate with the United States, as long as its hostile policy towards my country remains unchanged.

Our requirements are very simple: first, respect our sovereignty; second, give us assurances of non-aggression in legal forms; and third, do not obstruct our economic development. There is no reason for the United States not to accept our simple demands if it really wants to solve the issue on the Korean peninsula. It has said that it wants to solve this issue peacefully through diplomatic means, yet it does not accept that we sit together to solve this issue. Without sitting together face to face, no solution can be deployed. Accordingly, your understanding concerning the peaceful solutions cited by the United States is not correct.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and recognize the distinguished Ambassador of Sweden, Ambassador Salander.

Mr. SALANDER (Sweden): Mr. President, may I just again briefly state that the States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty do not recognize that it should be possible, as it were, to "save" a portion of the 90-day withdrawal period from one occasion to another. Accordingly, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is still a State party to the NPT.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Sweden for his statement and recognize the distinguished Ambassador of Japan, Ambassador Inoguchi.

Ms. INOGUCHI (Japan): Mr. President, I am sorry for taking the floor so many times. I would just like very briefly to repeat the second point made by me earlier that I agree with anyone in the room, including the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that, as many have pointed out, the Conference on Disarmament is not the most appropriate forum to discuss the kind of issues which we have been discussing and to which we have allocated so much time this morning.

I believe that we all have common and vested interests in preserving Geneva and this Conference on Disarmament as an important and meaningful forum and a constructive and thoughtful place of multilateralism and multilateral dialogue, and I hope that we can all share that position. I have strong faith in every one of you that we cherish this multilateral body and that we do not want to create excessive difficulties in this forum that would hinder us from accomplishing the enormous mission that has been set before us. I strongly believe that all the members present in this room should be able to share the very basic starting position which I have just outlined.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Japan for her statement and now call upon the distinguished representative of the United States of America, Mr. McGinnis.

Mr. McGINNIS (United States of America): Mr. President, I just wanted to make one point: that the United States is interested in pursuing a peaceful diplomatic solution to this situation and has no hostile intent toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and that what we need to do is enter into a discussion based on the parties agreeing to and returning and following and implementing their international commitments.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the United States of America for that statement and recognize the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. Jang Il Hun.

Mr. JANG Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, I shall be very brief. I completely agree with the distinguished representative from Japan that this is not the proper forum to debate the nuclear issue of the Korean peninsula.

Turning now to the issue of our membership in the NPT, we wish to state once again that our country is no longer a State party to the NPT. As my colleague mentioned earlier, in 1993 we informed IAEA and the President of the United Nations Security Council that we were withdrawing from the NPT, and the required notice period was 90 days. Our withdrawal was also recognized at the time by the United States representative and the United Nations Security Council and one day was left to run of the notice period. That is why they also recognized my country's special status in the NPT. Now that my country has declared its withdrawal formally, through a statement by its Government, however, it is no longer a member of the NPT.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for that statement.

That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not appear to be the case.

Distinguished delegates, I would like to take this opportunity to bid farewell to our colleague, Mr. Tom Markram, the Deputy Permanent Representative of South Africa, who will be leaving Geneva soon to take on new responsibilities. We are familiar with his diplomatic skills, his professionalism and his forthrightness in presenting the position of his country in the Conference on Disarmament and in other disarmament meetings. We have also appreciated his commitment to the task of putting forward new ideas in an endeavour to resolve the outstanding issues that face us. We will remember him as a strong advocate of all that this Conference stands for. Accordingly, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, and also on behalf of the secretariat, I would like to wish Mr. Markram success in his new assignments and happiness for the future.

Another colleague of ours, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya, Mr. Michael Oyugi, is also leaving us and this is his last day in the plenary of the Conference on Disarmament. During the five years that Mr. Oyugi has been with us here, he has been very active in the Conference on Disarmament, as well as other disarmament forums. Mr. Oyugi has very often brought to our deliberations here in the plenary and in the Group of 21 and other bodies, where I have also had the pleasure of being in meetings with him, a very lucid and straightforward approach which has been very productive and widely appreciated. I would like to take this opportunity also, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and my own behalf, as well as on behalf of the secretariat, to wish Mr. Oyugi all the very best in his new assignment and happiness for the future.

Distinguished delegates, we had plans to convene an informal plenary today after the formal plenary, but I believe that it would be counterproductive at this point to go into an informal plenary and that we need therefore to schedule another informal plenary. Some quick consultations that I have had with the secretariat and with some delegations indicate that tomorrow and Monday are not suitable days, because many of our colleagues are going to be occupied with the consultations on the Ottawa Convention and Monday, I am told, is the opening of the intersessional meeting of the Ottawa Convention. I therefore suggest that we meet again in an informal plenary session on Tuesday, at 10 a.m., to continue what we had scheduled for today's informal plenary, namely, the consideration of the proposal by the group of five ambassadors, as we had planned, and, of course, a continuation of our basic efforts to get the Conference on Disarmament back to work as intended.

I take it that we are in agreement with this approach, and, unless there is any delegation which wishes to take the floor at this stage, I intend to adjourn today's meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.