

# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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## FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 27 February 2003, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Djismun Kasri (Indonesia)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 921st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished delegates, as you are aware, last Monday a severe earthquake hit a remote area in the western part of China, killing at least 257 people and destroying hundreds of buildings. I would like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, our sympathy and sincere condolences to the survivors and to the Government and the people of China.

I have a long list of speakers for today's plenary meeting. So far we have on our list 12 speakers, from Belgium, Ukraine, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Malaysia, Japan, Romania, Italy, Mongolia, Thailand and Turkey.

I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Belgium, Ambassador Jean Lint.

Mr. LINT (Belgium): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I take the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of this important responsibility. You can count on the total support of my delegation in your quest for a programme of work acceptable for all, so that we can start work in the Conference on Disarmament.

I take the floor in my capacity as President of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. On 1 March 2003, that is, in two days, we are going to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention.

And we will have every reason to celebrate, as 131 States, among which 39 are members of the Conference on Disarmament, are now parties to the Convention, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, and as an additional 15 States, among which 4 are members of the Conference on Disarmament, have signed the Convention but have not yet ratified it.

Witness of the vitality of the Convention was the success of the informal intersessional meeting held two weeks ago in Geneva and attended by more than 500 participants from all over the world.

They made it clear that the Convention is about multilateralism, as mine-affected States and States in a position to help them are working together in a spirit of cooperation to tackle the problems of mine clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance, with the important input of partners like ICBL, ICRC and the relevant international organizations.

The Convention is about the fight against the terror of inhumane and cowardly conventional weapons that continue to kill and maim thousands of innocent people each year.

(Mr. Lint, Belgium)

The Convention is also about compliance. 1 March marks both four years since the Convention entered into force and the date when 45 States parties will be required to comply with the Convention's first deadline for stockpile destruction. The compliance rate of this Convention is extremely impressive, as all but one State party with a 1 March 2003 deadline have already indicated that they will no longer possess stockpiles on that date.

The Convention is about States taking meaningful actions to disarm, promote peace and address the humanitarian impact of anti-personnel mines. And action is exactly what we have seen from the 55 States parties that either have eliminated anti-personnel mines from their arsenals or will soon complete their destruction programmes. Together they have destroyed almost 30 million landmines. And to achieve that, the States parties have accepted a sense of ownership as even States with scarce financial resources have destroyed their stockpiles.

The Convention is about transparency, as more than 80 per cent of the States parties have submitted reports about their national legislation, stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines and locations of mined areas.

The Convention is about an international norm, as many States not party to the Convention have implemented national legislation to prohibit export and transit. Some have imposed a moratorium on production. All are encouraged to take steps to join the Convention soon.

With resolution 57/74 of 22 November 2002, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction", adopted at the General Assembly by a vote of 143 in favour to none against, with 23 abstentions, and co-sponsored by a record number of 140 States, among which were 10 signatories, 2 of them members of the Conference on Disarmament - Poland and Ukraine - all States that had not signed the Convention were invited to accede to it without delay. In this connection, we are glad to hear that Turkey is in the final stage of becoming a party to the Convention. We welcome the positive statements made by Sri Lanka during the peace process talks pointing to the possibility of joining the Convention.

With that resolution, all States that had signed but not ratified the Convention were urged to ratify it without delay. In this context, we welcome the fact that the Greek Parliament voted unanimously on 19 March 2002 to ratify the Convention and that Greece will deposit its instrument on the same day as Turkey. We also welcome the fact that the Lithuanian Government presented a proposal to its Parliament on ratification of the Convention at the end of 2002. We would like to encourage Ethiopia, which signed the Convention on 3 December 1997, Indonesia, which signed it on 4 December 1997, Poland, which signed it on the same day and Ukraine, which signed it on 24 February 1999, to ratify the Convention as soon as feasible.

(Mr. Lint, Belgium)

With that resolution, all States that had not ratified the Convention or acceded to it were invited to provide, on a voluntary basis, information to make global mine action efforts more effective. In this regard, we welcome the fact that Lithuania submitted a voluntary transparency report under article 7 in June 2002. We encourage all States not party to follow that example.

The Convention is about reaching universalization. Through our actions, we have demonstrated our firm belief that the humanitarian impact of the anti-personnel landmines necessitates their elimination. At the same time, the States that have destroyed mines, have demonstrated that their armed forces can live without these weapons. We encourage States that have not yet joined the Convention to follow our lead.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Belgium for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. SKURATOVSKYI (Ukraine): Mr. President, I should like to assure our esteemed audience that the Government of Ukraine is doing everything possible for the earliest possible ratification of the Ottawa Convention by our Parliament.

But first of all, since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, let me congratulate you on assuming the presidency of our deliberations and express our strong belief that your wisdom and experience will serve the interests of all delegations and help to secure a long-awaited breakthrough in considering the programme of work. The delegation of Ukraine pledges its support and commitment in assisting you in these endeavours.

My delegation would also like to add its voice to the number of delegations who have expressed their support for the proposals of the five ambassadors. Though the proposals fall short of expectations in Ukraine - as a State party which played a pioneering role in the world process of disarmament - we are fully aware that we must reckon with reality and do whatever can be done under the circumstances. We cannot but express our bitter disappointment, however, at the fact that the process so enthusiastically started in the early 1990s has come to a standstill at the beginning of this millennium. Moreover, we cannot ignore the fact that this standstill, caused by an abrupt change of mind and attitude of some key players, has evidently disheartened other States, but could inspire those who still cling to cold-war values.

We agree with the view expressed in this hall that the key to solving the problem of the Conference on Disarmament rests with capitals. Delegations here must reflect the spirit of the discussions at this august forum to their capitals.

Under the circumstances, therefore, my delegation deems it necessary

to work on the basis of the five ambassadors' proposal;

to urge the States that want the five ambassadors' proposal to be amended to submit their proposals in writing as soon as possible;

(Mr. Skuratovskyi, Ukraine)

to proceed from the notion that the elements of the five ambassadors' proposal should not be interdependent and, accordingly, should it become impossible to proceed with all the elements, to proceed with those agreed upon while continuing to seek consensus on the outstanding elements; and

to refrain at this stage from trying to add new elements to the programme of work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Ukraine. I would now like to give the floor to the representative of Australia, Ambassador Smith.

Mr. SMITH (Australia): Mr. President, I would like to extend to you my congratulations and best wishes on your appointment as President of this Conference. It is a pleasure to see the representative of Indonesia, our great northern neighbour, with whom Australia has such strong and cooperative relations, leading our work here in the Conference on Disarmament. I can assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in seeking progress in the work of the Conference through your term. Good though it is to see you in the chair, Ambassador Kasri, let me just say how sorry I am that Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti is unable to be here with us. I would be grateful if you would convey to him our very best wishes.

A world free of nuclear weapons is a goal that I think all of us here aspire to. But it is a goal that will only realistically be achieved through effective, universal nuclear non-proliferation regimes. This is why Australia is unwavering in its commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This is why Australia is a strong supporter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). And this is why Australia advocates the immediate commencement of negotiations to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

The most powerful barrier to nuclear weapons proliferation is the difficulty of acquiring sufficient quantities of weapons-usable fissile material. An effective fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) will tighten international controls on the production of fissile material, further raising the bar to nuclear proliferation. Importantly, it will bring all nuclear facilities capable of producing fissile material for use in weapons in all States, including the NPT nuclear-weapon States, under legally-binding international verification.

Capping the amount of fissile material available for use in weapons is an essential step towards achieving irreversible nuclear disarmament. We are therefore profoundly disappointed that FMCT negotiations have yet to begin, despite the FMCT having been repeatedly endorsed as the next logical step on the arms control and disarmament agenda, most recently in a consensus resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. Australia urges all members of the Conference on Disarmament to agree to a programme of work now, so that this Conference can once again productively contribute to enhancing global security.

(Mr. Smith, Australia)

Until there is a start to formal negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, Australia sees value in further informal work in Geneva on FMCT issues. In this context, we greatly appreciate the Netherlands initiative for a structured series of FMCT seminars, the next of which is scheduled for tomorrow. We regard the seminars as a valuable educative and information-sharing exercise that helps delegations better to understand the important role an FMCT will play in promoting nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We therefore strongly encourage all delegations, especially those who have been unwilling to do so in the past, to take advantage of this opportunity and to participate actively in these seminars.

I would also like to urge all delegations to participate in the jointly-organized Japan-Australia-UNIDIR verification workshop, scheduled for 28 March, as announced by our colleague, Ambassador Inoguchi, at last week's plenary session. This workshop will allow us better to understand how verification works under the existing arms control and disarmament regimes, and will provide a further opportunity to consider what verification may look like under a future FMCT.

Before concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to support the comments just made by Ambassador Jean Lint regarding the success of the recent Ottawa Convention intersessional meeting and, in particular, the stockpile destruction programme. The fact that the first deadline will pass on Saturday this week, and that 44 States parties, including Australia, will meet that deadline, is a particularly satisfying development and one that sends out a powerful message to the whole world that anti-personnel mines are not a weapon essential to any State's security. On the contrary, they constitute a menace to civilians and they have no place in any country's arsenal.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Smith for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair, as well as for the good wishes to Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti. I will certainly convey to him these best wishes. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Canada, Ambassador Westdal.

Mr. WESTDAL (Canada): Congratulations on your assumption of office, Ambassador. We welcome your leadership and we will do all we can to help you.

Mr. President, this Saturday, here in Geneva, at our missions in other countries and all across our own country Canadians will celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Ottawa Convention. We are heartened by its growth. A total of 131 countries are now on board. Ten joined in the last year, including some of the world's most mine-infected. And I want to say a special word of welcome to Canada's seat-mate here in the Conference on Disarmament. Cameroon's commitment enters into force on the fourth anniversary itself. And we wish everyone still outside would do so too. That will not happen, of course, but all through next year, in which Canada will coordinate the universalization contact group, we are going to do our utmost to bring closer the day when it will. And let me mention, Mr. President, that we hope that your own country will soon be able to ratify.

(Mr. Westdal, Canada)

What we will celebrate on Saturday above all is that the Convention has created a powerful new international norm. The proof is that many countries remaining outside the Convention nonetheless recognize and pay real respect to its role and its goals. They contribute to mine clearance and destruction and they abide by its norms against use, production and export. In our view, the Convention is comprehensive. It is legally binding. It has a large and growing membership, and it does not need to be supplemented by other legally-binding instruments that would only partially address the problem. Those States that consider that they are unable to join the Convention and fully serve its humanitarian goals at this time are encouraged to take steps themselves by refusing to transfer anti-personnel landmines, for example, or by destroying those stockpiles, and thus reinforcing the efforts of the broad international community until they can join in.

The Convention is making a real difference both in mentality and on the ground in real lives. Governments, civil society and the general public are now much more aware of the dangers of landmines and are actively committed to their elimination. A collective spirit and approach have emerged. Developed and developing countries, mine-affected and mine-free, all participate together, along with civil society, and contribute in a shared spirit of welcomed cooperation, as exemplified in the very full week of intersessional standing committees that recently took place. There were over 500 delegates from States parties, States not yet party and international and non-governmental organizations, all working together to get more and better aid to victims, to speed mine-clearance, to promote new mine-action technologies, the destruction of stockpiles, mine-risk education and in other ways to enhance the general operation of the Convention.

There has indeed been impressive progress over the four years of this instrument's existence. ICBL reports that 61 countries have destroyed well over 30 million landmines in the past decade, most of them in programmes to comply with the Ottawa Convention. That action will avert a great deal of misery and save many lives. The Convention has demonstrable impact on States' behaviour. There have, we note, been no reports of the use of anti-personnel mines in Ethiopia and Eritrea since June 2000. Eritrea has since acceded to the Convention.

This fourth anniversary of the Convention is also significant in that it marks the first deadline for some States parties, that of stockpile destruction, and here there is welcome news of the vigorous implementation of the Convention's obligations. We applaud all countries which have completed the destruction of their stockpiles and we offer fresh encouragement and practical help to those which have not yet fulfilled that promise.

(continued in French)

We are fully aware of the major challenges confronting us in implementing the Convention, particularly in developing countries. To support this process, the Canadian Government has recently renewed its commitment to mine action by announcing a new contribution of \$50 million. Through this contribution, Canada will be able to step up its constant endeavours in pursuit of the humanitarian goals of the Ottawa Convention. For only by facilitating the destruction of anti-personnel mines in the areas where they have been laid, by

(Mr. Westdal, Canada)

raising the awareness of populations to the dangers posed by mines, by destroying stockpiles of mines, by rendering assistance to victims, by promoting their reintegration in society and by convincing more and more new States to join the Convention and abide by its provisions will we be able to attain those humanitarian goals.

The Ottawa Convention is about to enter an important new phase in its life. In addition to the constant endeavours to which I have just referred, States parties' attention will henceforward be focused on the Convention's very first review conference, which will take place next year. Under the very able guidance of Ambassador Lint, who is chairing the Fourth Meeting of States parties, a consultation and consideration process is under way. For Canada, this conference will present an opportunity to celebrate the numerous triumphs which the Convention has already scored and also to consider the challenges which remain to be surmounted. The message that we would like to get across on this occasion is, above all, that we still have work to do and that the Convention still needs attention and the commitment of our political leaders in order finally to bring about a world free of landmines.

Considering the distance that we have covered in four years, we are convinced that this lies within our means. This is our aim: a world free of this threat. Canada's commitment will not falter before this task.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Westdal for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I would now like to give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Sanders.

Mr. SANDERS (Netherlands): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I take the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you and assure you of my delegation's full support for your efforts and express its confidence in your diplomatic skills in guiding this Conference.

Before I take up the main topic of my statement, I would like to associate myself with those who have spoken and will speak on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Mine-Ban Convention. I can inform the members of this Conference that the total stockpile of anti-personnel mines once possessed by the Netherlands, which in 1996 amounted to more than 250,000 has been destroyed. The last remaining mines were destroyed in December 2002. In doing so, we have fully complied with the provisions of the Ottawa Convention.

Last week the distinguished representative of Japan, Ambassador Inoguchi, took the floor on the subject of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of our ideas on this subject.

It goes without saying that the Netherlands fully shares the Japanese view on the priority attached to FMCT negotiations. Since the 1995 NPT Review Conference and the Shannon mandate, as laid down in document CD/1299, there is in fact consensus that FMCT negotiations should take place. I will not go into the reasons why these negotiations are still not taking place;



(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

we are all too well aware of that. I will only repeat what I have said before in this room: the Netherlands can support the so-called five ambassadors' proposal as it stands and is in a position to start work in the Conference on Disarmament on this basis as from this moment onwards.

The main purpose of my statement today is to address some of the substantive aspects of an FMCT following what South Africa offered us in their excellent working paper, contained in document CD/1671, and also the aspects highlighted by my Japanese colleague last week. I do so because I believe that such a debate should be conducted in this Conference, regardless of whether we have a programme of work or not.

In the early spring of 1999, four years ago now, when FMCT negotiations seemed to be imminent, my delegation received instructions from our capital, containing a number of principles and positions to be taken during those negotiations.

The points of departure for our position were - and are - the following. First, a ban on the production of fissile material must be adequately verifiable at the lowest possible cost: adequate cost-effective verification is essential. Second, in due course there needs to be convergence between the IAEA safeguards for the non-nuclear-weapon States and comparable measures to be taken under the FMCT for the nuclear-weapon States and non-members of the NPT. Third, a condition for entry into force of the treaty must be its ratification by the nuclear-weapon States and the non-members of the NPT. Fourth - last but not least - an FMCT is an intermediate step on the road towards nuclear disarmament and not a final settlement. Accordingly, a number of outstanding issues, like stocks or acquisition, do not necessarily have to be dealt with in a definitive way in this treaty.

Our expectation, not surprisingly, was and is that the two major issues of the FMCT negotiations will be the scope and the verification of the treaty.

On scope, the Shannon mandate does not preclude the negotiations from addressing other issues besides a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. It is no secret that a number of delegations in this Conference will certainly raise the issue of past production.

The Netherlands could accept the inclusion of the existing stocks in the negotiations, but at the same time we feel that the early achievement of an agreement is more important. For that reason, we would prefer a limited interpretation of the mandate. However desirable addressing stocks and also acquisition might be from a nuclear disarmament perspective, it could potentially delay the negotiations to an unacceptable degree.

This does not mean that transparency about stocks and monitored reduction and conversion would not be of tremendous and immediate importance for nuclear disarmament and international security. Our position on this subject is well known, I may assume. For that I refer you to the statement I made on this subject exactly one year ago, on 28 February last year, as contained in document CD/PV.895. This is all on transparency, as you may remember.

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

Regarding the issue of stocks, the Netherlands could support a two-track approach whereby, in parallel with FMCT negotiations, a commitment to negotiating a treaty covering existing stocks would be envisaged as a next step in the process towards nuclear disarmament. We also see great merit in the South African approach to include in an FMCT weapons material declared in excess and associated closed down or decommissioned facilities.

On verification, the second principal issue to be negotiated is what needs to be verified to meet the requirement of the mandate, "effectively verifiable". The so-called focused approach would mean that verification would be limited to enrichment and processing facilities because they have the direct potential for producing weapons-grade fissile material. In addition, this approach should provide for detection capabilities for non-declared facilities. The focused approach seems to be inspired mainly by considerations of simplicity, transparency and easy implementation. Financial reasons are also a major argument of course for this approach.

The problem with the focused approach is its reliability. As we all know, civilian and research reactors, hot cells and other nuclear facilities that would not be covered by the focused approach might well be used for clandestine processing activities. Moreover, it seems questionable whether the detection capability could ever be adequate in countries where in the past such vast and diversified nuclear activity has occurred.

For this reason, the Netherlands has a preference for a more comprehensive approach. Admittedly, this would be more expensive. As IAEA has pointed out, however, verification of large enrichment and processing facilities is relatively much more expensive than providing safeguards for small-scale civilian nuclear facilities. Thus, the additional costs of covering the latter category would probably not be excessive.

There is also an important argument of principle involved and this is the principle of non-discrimination. The non-nuclear-weapon States have to - or will have to - accept the most comprehensive safeguards, certainly with the acceptance of the additional protocol. It would not be consistent to accept that for the nuclear-weapon States and the non-members of the NPT the focused approach would suffice. This would make an FMCT discriminatory and would put pressure on existing IAEA safeguards accepted by the others.

It is the view of the Netherlands that the FMCT verification regime should be based upon the present system of IAEA safeguards to ensure coherence of the verification of all fissile materials, whether it be under an FMCT, or under the NPT and the present safeguards system. Doing so would also avoid the situation where, over time, both verification regimes started to grow apart, with all its subsequent effects.

Regarding implementation, the Netherlands would be in favour of a phased FMCT implementation process for the eight relevant countries, starting with enrichment and processing, later to be extended to other facilities. Ideally speaking, the verification provisions of an FMCT would have to converge in due course with those of the NPT.

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

For reasons of expertise and cost-effectiveness, the IAEA would be the appropriate organization to be tasked with the verification of an FMCT. A separate organization does not seem to be necessary. We might consider adopting the NPT formula: delegating verification to the IAEA and having regular conferences of States parties to review compliance with the treaty.

I have just carried out the instructions that my delegation received in the early spring of 1999. I should have done so in the course of a negotiating process. Unfortunately, circumstances so far have not permitted these negotiations to take place. I have therefore done it outside the framework of negotiations but inside the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. I call upon other members of the Conference to do likewise, as Japan and South Africa have already done. We might develop an interesting record and useful reference for subsequent negotiations.

In the meantime, we should continue to sharpen our minds and to continue to be a centre of excellence for this and other disarmament issues that are being dealt with in Geneva. I was delighted to participate in an informal meeting organized by the Russian Federation and China earlier this week on a framework paper concerning the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This type of event is indeed most useful for the purpose that I have just mentioned.

Likewise, and in the absence of negotiations, the Netherlands will continue with its informal and educational exercise on FMCT. And we will continue to keep the Conference on Disarmament informed about this. I hope to see you all at our meeting tomorrow, Friday, 28 February, at 3 p.m. in conference room VII.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Sanders for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Rajmah of Malaysia.

Ms. RAJMAH (Malaysia): Mr. President, at the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. As Indonesia is a close neighbour of Malaysia, I am indeed pleased to see you assuming this important post. My delegation would like to assure you of our support.

Our two countries are members of the Non-Aligned Movement, a grouping that brings together 116 member countries in the pursuit of world peace, security and development. The heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement recently met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 24 and 25 February 2003, to address the crucial global issues affecting their peoples, with a view to agreeing to a set of actions in the promotion of peace, security and development, conducive to a multilateral system of relations based on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the political independence of States, the rights of peoples to self-determination and non-intervention in matters which are essentially within the jurisdiction of States, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

(Ms. Rajmah, Malaysia)

The Thirteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, attended by 63 heads of State and Government, took place against a backdrop of an impending war against Iraq, the rise of unilateralism in international relations, an increase in acts of terrorism globally and the deepening downturn of the world economy. Faced with these new challenges, the Summit Conference in Kuala Lumpur saw a continued revitalization of the role of the Non-Aligned Movement in a world, free of the cold war that had once brought the Movement into existence, but a world which is now dominated by a single super-Power.

In pronouncing on the issues of disarmament and international security in the Final Document of the Thirteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, the heads of State and Government expressed their strong concern at the growing resort to unilateralism and unilaterally imposed prescriptions and, in this context, strongly underlined that multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, provided the only sustainable method of addressing disarmament and international security issues. They reiterated their concerns on several issues of international peace and security, in particular those relating to nuclear disarmament, which remains the Movement's highest priority. In this regard, the heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement expressed their concern at the lack of progress by the nuclear-weapon States towards accomplishing the elimination of their nuclear arsenals and emphasized the urgent need to commence negotiations without delay.

The heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirmed the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament and emphasized the necessity of starting negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention. They reiterated their call on the Conference on Disarmament to establish, as soon as possible and as the highest priority, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

Malaysia is indeed proud and honoured to have played host to such an important summit meeting of 116 countries, one of the largest political groupings in the world, comprising two thirds of the membership of the United Nations. As the new Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, Malaysia will wear its non-aligned credentials with pride and pledges to do its very best in leading the Movement over the next three years during this turbulent period in international relations. In this regard, I would like to commend South Africa on a job well done over the preceding years as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement. Given the significance for the deliberations of the Conference on Disarmament of the section on disarmament and international security in the Final Document of the Thirteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Kuala Lumpur, I would like to request that the secretariat circulate this document as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

Membership of the Conference on Disarmament is currently open only to a select group of countries. The international peace and security issues confronting the Conference are, however, of direct interest and importance to all members of the international community, not least to the member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. So the Conference on

(Ms. Rajmah, Malaysia)

Disarmament must, in its deliberations, take cognizance of this interest and play its due role in realizing the aspirations and hope of the global community in making this world a safer and better place to live in. Sadly, the Conference is now in its sixth non-productive year of not having achieved any substantive work.

Despite differing perceptions of exactly who and what is causing the problem, we all agree nevertheless that the current impasse on the programme of work in the Conference on Disarmament is eroding the credibility of this institution. Many of us cannot understand why the Conference has not been able to commence substantive work, especially when we consider its past performance, which includes successful conclusion of two major disarmament treaties, namely the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993 and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996.

There are those who see the protracted deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament as primarily due to the inflexible postures of the nuclear-weapon States with regard to negotiations on nuclear disarmament and measures to prevent an arms race in outer space. Many have argued that the causes of the current stalemate are beyond the ability of member delegations of the Conference on Disarmament to overcome and that the solution lies in the exercise of political will at the highest level.

As the much-touted sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament should and must be able to respond to the multifarious challenges confronting the international community in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation in all aspects and in international peace and security. The success of the Conference on Disarmament now is even more crucial in a world that is beset by the fear of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. The world is now threatened not only with nuclear weapons but with biological weapons, chemical weapons and radiological weapons, the use of which in warfare and terrorist attacks can kill by the thousands.

While all weapons of mass destruction must be eliminated, nuclear disarmament should and must remain the paramount concern of the international community, since nuclear weapons top the list of weapons of mass destruction. Nuclear weapons must be eliminated, be they in the hands of terrorists or in the hands of nuclear-weapon States. The big Powers must try to find other means of achieving security, instead of through the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. Those States which are armed to the teeth must lead by example by eliminating their stock of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. There cannot be two standards to be applied according to the convenience of the big Powers.

As a member of the Group of 21 within the Conference on Disarmament, Malaysia would like to underline the Group's concern that nuclear disarmament should continue to be the highest priority for the Conference and that the systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear weapons - with the ultimate goal of their complete elimination - remains one of the priority tasks of the international community. History has witnessed the horrendous effects of nuclear weapons on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the first and only time when nuclear weapons were used, and history would not wish to see a repetition of such acts by humankind,

(Ms. Rajmah, Malaysia)

against humankind, ever again. In this regard, Malaysia urges all nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT not to renege on their undertaking to “accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals”, made at the NPT Review Conference in 2000. At the same time, other States not in possession of nuclear weapons must continue to observe the principles of non-proliferation. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, Malaysia would like to urge, in line with the Final Document of the Thirteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, that “efforts for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority”.

On the issue of fissile material, Malaysia supports the negotiating mandate for a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. We are of the view, however, that the negotiations should also include existing stockpiles. The immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations constitutes the next essential step in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation process.

Malaysia also believes that an arms race in outer space should be prevented through a legally binding instrument. It must be recognized that outer space is the common heritage of humankind and should be explored and used only for peaceful purposes. If left unchecked, the intensification of military activities in outer space could trigger an arms race that would be detrimental to the cause of peace and the future of humankind.

The impasse in the work of the Conference on Disarmament has been an over-sung tune which has yet to find a new tempo: failure to do this is certainly not due to lack of ideas or efforts. Past presidents of the Conference on Disarmament have striven hard to make a breakthrough by submitting valuable proposals. It is not wrong to say that the Amorim proposal was the closest thing that we have had to an agreed programme of work in the Conference on Disarmament. The opportunity to break the stalemate eluded us then, however.

In this context, Malaysia welcomes the five ambassadors’ initiative tabled at the Conference’s plenary meeting on 23 January 2003 as a possible way forward. This unprecedented cross-group effort represents a very positive step towards reaching a consensus programme of work. We understand that the five ambassadors’ proposal is an evolving process and is open to comments and suggestions for further improvement, in the hope that we can make a breakthrough in our work. As a member of the Conference on Disarmament, Malaysia would like to continue to explore all available avenues leading to the commencement of substantive work in the Conference through a balanced and comprehensive programme of work.

On the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the Ottawa Convention, I join preceding speakers in encouraging countries not yet members to become parties to the Convention. Malaysia remains deeply concerned that anti-personnel mines continue to kill, maim and threaten the lives of countless innocent people each day. We believe that the humanitarian suffering

(Ms. Rajmah, Malaysia)

caused by the anti-personnel mines far outweigh their military utility. We recognize that the Ottawa Convention has established an international norm against the use of anti-personnel mines, a norm which has persuaded an impressive number of countries to sign and ratify the Convention.

Given the uncertain times through which we are passing, it was inevitable that the focus of the Summit in Kuala Lumpur turned to the impending war in Iraq, with the voices of the Non-Aligned Movement strongly raised in unison against the war and the unilateralism of the big Powers. For those countries which are so bent on solving problems through waging war, rather than through peaceful means, I would like to conclude my statement with a quotation from the opening speech of Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad at the Thirteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Kuala Lumpur, so that we may together ponder on the best way forward:

“War solves nothing. War is primitive. Today’s war is more primitive than Stone Age wars. The targets are not the fighters and not the combatants. The target is the ordinary civilian, the women, children and old people. Whether it is terrorist attacks or military action, these are the victims.

War must be outlawed. That will have to be our struggle for now.”

In concluding, may I put it to this august body: what better forum is there for considering the outlawing of war or the illegality of war than the Conference on Disarmament itself? This could perhaps be our noble goal for the future.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Rajmah for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Next on my list is Japan. I give the floor to Ambassador Inoguchi.

Ms. INOBUCHI (Japan): Allow me at the outset, Mr. President, to assure you, once again, of the full support of my delegation as you guide us through this difficult period for the Conference on Disarmament. Allow me also to express my deep condolences to the people and the Government of China for the more than 250 victims of the recent earthquake which occurred along its far western border.

In our last plenary meeting, I asked for the floor to take up the issue of FMCT and to alert member States to the pressing need to control and manage fissile material in order to maintain international security in the face of even greater dangers from nuclear proliferation to States and non-State actors, including terrorists. Today, I have asked for the floor to report on recent events indicative of the strong commitment of my Government in the area of conventional weapons, namely, anti-personnel landmines, small arms and transparency in armaments.

Before doing so, however, please allow me to express my thanks to the distinguished representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Sanders, for following up some of the substantive points which I discussed last week and in particular, for doing so along the framework and

(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

structure which I laid out last week. I also thank the Ambassador for making the current position of his Government clear on some of the key issues which will be discussed if FMCT negotiations are to start again. I thought that all his comments were very helpful to the entire community of States interested in seeing these negotiations start again.

Turning now to the issue of anti-personnel landmines, I might recall that Japan was one of the original members of the Ottawa Convention and this year it completed its obligations under article 4 of the Convention. I would like to take this opportunity to report to the international community, with pride and special emphasis, that the Prime Minister of Japan, Junichiro Koizumi, was present at the ceremony on the destruction of Japan's last remaining stockpile of anti-personnel landmines, held on the afternoon of 8 February at a Self-Defence Force base in Shiga Prefecture, and that the Prime Minister himself triggered the explosion of those last remaining mines. Also in attendance were the Senior Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary of the Defence Agency, as well as numerous parliamentarians, including representatives of the parliamentary league on this issue. My capital also instructed me to return to Japan to participate in this event and to report on Geneva-based efforts in the area of anti-personnel landmines. The entire ceremony was illustrative of the clear political commitment on the part of my Government to the cause of the Ottawa Convention.

Children, including victims from a country affected by anti-personnel landmines, were also invited to the ceremony. They helped us build awareness across generations and to share our commitment with the generations to come, those who will bear the responsibility of eradicating tragedies across the world related to anti-personnel landmines in the future. My sorrow goes to those victims, including children, who would not have suffered if the world - and that includes Japan - had acted more rapidly.

I can nevertheless assure you, Mr. President, that Japan will do everything in its power to help affected countries cope with mine-clearance operations and that Japan will continue to stand by mine survivors in their courageous efforts to deal with the difficulties they now face. The Prime Minister was particularly pleased to see that Japan will serve as co-chair of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Awareness and Mine Action Technologies from September this year, and expressed his strong desire that all members redouble their efforts to eradicate anti-personnel landmine-related human tragedies.

I would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government of Japan as one of the co-sponsors, to express our sincere appreciation to the Government of Indonesia for hosting the regional seminar on the implementation of the programme of action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held on 10 and 11 February, and the United Nations workshop on transparency in armaments held on 14 and 15 February. The Government of Indonesia successfully hosted both of these events in Bali with warm hospitality and efficiency. I would also like to express appreciation to Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, and his office, in particular, the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, for organizing both workshops.



(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

The Bali regional seminar on small arms was the first meeting of national contact or focal points of 21 nations in the Asia-Pacific region to exchange views on the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The seminar addressed such topics as the role of national contact points and national coordinating agencies, transborder cooperation and information-sharing, national laws and legislation and administrative procedures, export and import licensing systems and marking, stockpile management and record-keeping, and civil society cooperation.

I myself attended the seminar as Chair-designate of the first of the biennial meetings of States on the implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in July this year, and I had the opportunity to brief participants about the results of the informal open-ended consultations which I conducted here and in New York in preparation for the biennial meeting. There is no doubt that the seminar made a significant contribution to facilitating the regional implementation and harmonization of the programme of action.

The regional workshop on transparency in armaments also proved to be a resounding success. From my country, Ambassador Mitsuro Donowaki participated in this important meeting as a keynote speaker, and the primary objective of the workshop was to promote among the United Nations Member States familiarity with, and participation in, two global transparency instruments, namely, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures. All 10 ASEAN member countries, as well as several close neighbouring countries, such as Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand, China and the Republic of Korea, participated. It is the view of my Government that both of these instruments will gain even wider acceptance among Member States of the United Nations in years to come.

Finally, Mr. President, it is my great pleasure to announce that Japanese official development assistance is now available to address the problems of small arms and light weapons. Approximately \$17 million per year will be earmarked for funding a variety of constructive programmes and projects in this field. The first project to be financed by this budget is a "weapons in exchange for area development" project in Cambodia. I am very much looking forward to seeing beneficial programmes and projects being proposed, which will actually solve and make a difference in coping with and overcoming the problems of small arms and light weapons.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Inoguchi for her statement. The next speaker on my list is Romania: I therefore invite the representative of Romania, Ambassador Filip, to make her statement.

Ms. FILIP (Romania): Mr. President, please allow me to begin by congratulating you upon your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and by expressing the assurances of the full cooperation and support of my delegation, particularly in sustained efforts towards reaching a long awaited agreement on a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament.

(Ms. Filip, Romania)

I am taking the floor today on behalf of Romania and Switzerland, in our current capacity as co-chairs of the Standing Committee of Experts on Stockpile Destruction, in order to add our voice to the statement by Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium on the upcoming fourth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

This anniversary has a special significance for the States parties, since it is a landmark in the implementation of a fundamental obligation of the instrument, namely the destruction of anti-personnel stockpiles. The date 1 March 2003 is the deadline for the completion of stockpile destruction for those States parties that made possible the entry into force of the Convention. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their leadership and contribution to giving legal force to the Ottawa Convention, as well as for their constant efforts to comply with the stockpile destruction deadlines.

The anti-personnel mine ban process has been growing steadily since the entry into force of the Convention almost four years ago and we expect the preparations for the 2004 Review Conference further to boost our endeavours in this area. This very positive and encouraging process has been made possible through the commitment and joint efforts of all participants to eliminate the plague of anti-personnel mines: because of their faith in the core humanitarian objectives of the Ottawa Convention, because of their determination to ensure a better life for the victims of anti-personnel mines and because of their concern about the real barriers to social and economic development of human settlements in the mine-affected countries.

Stockpile destruction is a preventive measure aimed at eliminating the proliferation of anti-personnel mines. While a very technical matter per se, this year stockpile destruction gains an important political dimension for our whole community of States. It is not only a matter of compliance to an international legally-binding document, but also a test of the commitment of the States parties, as well as of those countries not yet party to the Ottawa Convention but which share the concerns regarding the long-term negative impact that anti-personnel mines have for the safety of innocent civilians and for sustainable development.

We are happy to see at this important juncture that stockpile destruction is treated with the highest responsibility by the States parties. We had confirmation of this fact during the recent meeting of our committee, which enjoyed a high level of participation both in the room and in the debates.

As Ambassador Lint has indicated, the compliance rate of the Convention is extremely impressive, as all but one State party with a 1 March deadline have indicated that they will no longer possess stockpiles on that date. Moreover, an important number of countries have signalled their intention to conclude their national stockpile destruction earlier - some, significantly earlier - than the four-year period provided for by the Convention.

(Ms. Filip, Romania)

Other participants have informed us about the difficulties that they are encountering in this process, and in some cases have requested further support from the donor community. This we see as a telling expression of the true spirit of open cooperation and partnership that defines the Ottawa Convention process.

A special word of appreciation goes to those delegations participating in the meetings of the Standing Committee of Experts on Stockpile Destruction, which, while not yet full-fledged States parties to the Convention, have provided detailed information on the level and composition of their anti-personnel stockpiles and their plans for destruction. We would like to congratulate them on their constructive and responsible attitude and we all look forward to welcoming them soon to our community.

Mr. President, since I have the floor, please allow me also to refer very briefly to the issue of small arms and light weapons, and to inform you and the participants at this meeting that, at the beginning of this week, from 24 to 26 February 2003, Bucharest was the venue for a regional seminar on the implementation of the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The event was hosted by the Government of Romania and co-sponsored by the Governments of Canada and Italy and is intended as a regional contribution to the 2003 meeting of States on implementation of the Programme of Action.

The main objective of the regional seminar was to bring together representatives from government and non-government sectors involved in the field of small arms, as well as representatives of international organizations and producers. The proceedings focused on the issues of marking and tracing and the relevant contribution of this activity to import-export and transit controls. It also gave an opportunity to the participants to share information on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action and the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons; to identify best practices in marking and tracing and export controls; and to identify areas that would benefit from the establishment of international standards and of ways and means to enhance the framework of cooperation at the regional and international levels for combating illicit trafficking in small arms.

The need to shape and enforce coherent regulations for the activity of the brokers was discussed and underlined and particular attention was given to the link between transnational crime and illicit trafficking in small arms in the region.

Mr. President, allow me also to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my Government to Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan and Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India for attending the Bucharest regional seminar on small arms and for their important contribution to the proceedings of that meeting.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Filip for her statement on behalf of Romania and Switzerland in their capacity as co-chairs of the Standing Committee of Experts on Stockpile Destruction. I would also like to thank her for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Italy.

Mr. SCOTTO (Italy): Mr. President, since this is the first time Italy is taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you, assure you of Italy's full support and wish you success in your tenure.

It gives me great pleasure to be taking the floor on this day that marks the fourth anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention. I would like to associate myself with Australia, Belgium, Canada, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands and Romania, who have also taken the floor on this occasion.

Italy has always been deeply convinced of the moral and political necessity of the Ottawa Convention as a means of significantly improving the life of the populations in many countries deeply affected by the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. Furthermore, we believe that moral and political consideration should bring us toward the strengthening of the principles of international law which are the foundations of the Convention.

Since Italy became a State party to the Convention we have taken great strides towards honouring it, and I shall briefly outline just how we have done so. As those delegations which participated in the February 2003 meetings of the Standing Committee of Experts on Stockpile Destruction will know, Italy - which is currently co-rapporteur of the Standing Committee - completed in October 2002 the destruction of its stockpile according to the provision of article 4 of the Convention, destroying a total of 7,122,000 mines - probably the largest stock among the States parties - one year ahead of the deadline. Italy applied simple technology in order to disassemble the different components and explosives of its anti-personnel landmines.

All were destroyed while giving full consideration to environmental concerns. This clearly demonstrates that the time limit of four years set by article 4 of the Ottawa Convention can be respected if there is the necessary political will and a genuine commitment from States parties to cooperate in mine-clearance actions with those States which are seeking assistance.

The second point I would like to emphasize is that Italy considers humanitarian demining a high priority and has therefore greatly increased its contribution to mine-action funding. In doing so, we would like to stress the importance of diligent project-monitoring and post-project evaluations. This is a practice that Italy would like to see strengthened. By providing as much technical and detailed information on the results achieved by the various projects involved, we will have the opportune conditions our Parliament requires to continue to support further funding for mine action. We feel that priority should be placed upon assisting other countries in their endeavour to support the Convention in a similar manner. As we have gained considerable

(Mr. Scotto, Italy)

insight in the technicalities of destroying explosive devices, we are able to assist any State party to do the same. In 2002, Italy increased its contributions to humanitarian demining and victim assistance operations to 9.81 million euros. Our main priorities were intended to ensure continuity in mine-action funding, as advocated by the afflicted countries.

Finally, Italy deems it necessary to stress the importance of the universalization of the Treaty and has therefore made several bilateral approaches to key non-member States in this regard. We continue to hope that, with sustained effort, we shall succeed in encouraging the non-member States to join the 131 countries that have already ratified the Ottawa Convention, in addition to the 15 countries which are signatories. We will not stop campaigning to raise the awareness of the public, Governments and also non-State actors, in the hope of gaining increased international support for the Convention.

On this auspicious occasion, I would like to take the opportunity to invite the non-State parties to make the gesture of destroying part of their stockpiles on a voluntary basis and to suggest putting into place a restriction regime in order to ban the export of anti-personnel landmines. It would be a significant and, in my view, not unrealistic step by which, without compromising their national security, they would demonstrate their adherence to the principle of this important Convention.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I would now like to give the floor to the representative of Mongolia, Ambassador Bekhbat.

Mr. BEKHBAT (Mongolia) (translated from French): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time in the plenary under your presidency, allow me, on behalf of the Mongolian delegation, to extend to you our warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I also wish to express my delegation's deep appreciation for the excellent work done by the outgoing president, Ambassador Rakesh Sood. I should also like to take this opportunity to express condolences to the delegation of the People's Republic of China, neighbour of my country, in connection with the earthquake which took away the lives of hundreds of people and to ask them to convey our sincere sympathy to the bereaved families.

(continued in English)

My delegation shares the general concerns and the growing frustration over the continued deadlock in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. The present situation at the Conference is especially regrettable in the light of the urgent need for an effective and coordinated response by the international community to new challenges.

(Mr. Bekhbat, Mongolia)

Given the nature of security threats in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September, the international community should redouble its efforts to reduce and eliminate weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and achieve tangible progress in the areas of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Some important international instruments designed to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation still await either entry into force or effective implementation, however.

My delegation fully subscribes to the view that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. It is therefore vitally important to translate into practice the manifested political will and the unequivocal commitments made with regard to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mongolia supports the adoption of such measures as the de-alerting of nuclear weapons, the removal of nuclear warheads from delivery vehicles, joint undertakings by the nuclear Powers not to be the first to use nuclear weapons, the provision of legally binding negative security assurances to non-nuclear States and other measures conducive to reducing the risk of unauthorized or miscalculated use of nuclear weapons.

The tragedy of 11 September gave a serious signal of the increasing danger of the possible use by non-State actors of weapons of mass destruction. The potential threat emanating from the possible use by terrorists of weapons of mass destruction must in no way be underestimated. In this context, I believe that multilateral approaches to arms control, disarmament and security issues, strict compliance with and further enhancement and universalization of the existing international instruments in this field are of paramount importance for advancing the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It is vitally important for the international community to promote closer cooperation in upgrading the physical protection of nuclear materials, combating illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and other radioactive sources, and finalizing work on the draft convention against nuclear terrorism.

Mongolia attaches prime significance to further promoting and strengthening the process of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. It welcomed the signing in May 2002 in Moscow of the START II Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States, which will substantially reduce the number of nuclear warheads by the year 2012. We believe it imperative that nuclear Powers continue their pursuit of nuclear disarmament in good faith, as stipulated in article VI of the NPT and in the decisions of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Mongolia supports efforts to ensure the successful outcome of the next Review Conference, to be held in 2005.

We believe that the consolidation and establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones are important factors in strengthening non-proliferation and promoting regional stability and security. Mongolia is striving to make its modest contribution to this cause by strengthening its nuclear-weapon-free status and supporting the establishment of such zones in various parts of the world.

(Mr. Bekhbat, Mongolia)

Outer space, being the common heritage of humankind, should be explored and used solely for peaceful purposes to the benefit of all countries. We support the joint initiative by the delegations of the Russian Federation and China aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space and threat or use of force against space objects through agreeing on and adopting a relevant legally binding instrument.

Mongolia fully shares the legitimate concerns of the international community over the illicit trafficking in and global proliferation of small arms and light weapons, especially in conflict-stricken regions. We attach great importance to the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted in 2001 by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We expect that the first of the biennial meetings of States on the implementation of this programme will contribute to attainment of this noble goal.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Group of 21 at the Conference's plenary meeting on 30 January.

The programme of work is still a stumbling block that prevents us from starting substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation appreciates your efforts, Mr. President, as well as the efforts by your predecessors to find a viable way out of this long-lasting impasse and revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We are all aware - and our colleague from Malaysia has stressed this point - that there has been no lack of proposals and initiatives but none of them so far has led us to a breakthrough.

We welcome the latest initiative, put forward by the five ambassadors, as a commendable effort to get the Conference down to substantive work. It is widely valued as a cross-regional initiative open to further amendments and improvements, with a view to accommodating the interests of all member States. My delegation can go along with many elements of this proposal. But we believe that further consultations are needed to make it acceptable to all members of the Conference.

In the view of my delegation, it is imperative to start focused and substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament by adopting a programme of work for the 2003 session and thereby to live up to the expectations of the international community. In parallel with our efforts to reach consensus on the programme of work, we should explore all other avenues.

In conclusion, I would like to assure you, Mr. President, that my delegation will work in close cooperation with you and other delegations to reinvigorate the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Bekhbat for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I still have two speakers on my list and I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. SUGONDHABHIROM (Thailand): First allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to reaffirm to you our full support.

I am taking the floor today to associate my delegation with the position expressed by Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium and other distinguished speakers who have preceded me on the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

Four years ago, the Convention on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction entered into force. A new international norm was born. The international community has committed itself to addressing the problems caused by anti-personnel mines. Since then, we have seen strong partnership among Governments, civil society and international organizations in what has come to be known as the “Ottawa process”, with increasingly significant participation by landmine survivors themselves.

Out of compassion for innocent victims of landmines in our own country and region, Thailand decided to join the Ottawa Convention and the Ottawa process. Four years later we remain steadfast in honouring our commitment under the Convention. On 24 April 2003, the last batch of the stockpile of anti-personnel mines in the Royal Thai Armed Forces will be destroyed in compliance with the Ottawa Convention.

The States parties to the Ottawa Convention have entrusted Thailand with hosting the fifth meeting of States parties, to be held in Bangkok in September 2003, the first time that a meeting of the States parties will be held in Asia. Thailand deems this both an honour and a great responsibility, and we shall do everything we can to make the meeting a success. May we take this opportunity, Mr. President, to invite all who are interested to the meeting in Bangkok in September.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Thailand for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. ESENLİ (Turkey): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I am taking the floor, allow me to extend my warmest congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation.

My delegation also conveys its thanks to Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India for his tireless efforts to move our work forward. I would also like to express my delegation’s appreciation for your endeavours to overcome the impasse in this unique institution, through which we bear responsibility for the rest of the international community.



(Mr. Esenli, Turkey)

As you may recall, last year Ambassador Sungar informed the Conference on Disarmament that the Ottawa Convention had been submitted to the Turkish Parliament for a constitutional procedure to be completed, and that it was on the verge of approval by the Parliamentary General Assembly. Owing to the early general elections in Turkey, however, the process had to be reinitiated this year.

As we are approaching the fourth anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention, I would like to report to the Conference that the Convention has been resubmitted to the Turkish Parliament for accession. On 20 February, seven days ago, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament endorsed the Convention and conveyed it to the General Assembly for final approval.

Today I would like once again to reiterate my country's determination to complete the accession process in the shortest time possible.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Turkey for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

With this, we have completed our list of speakers, I see the Ambassador of China, who would like to take the floor.

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, at the start of our meeting today, you expressed sympathy for the victims of the earthquake which occurred in Xinjiang, China. The distinguished ambassadors of Japan and Mongolia also expressed similar sentiments in their statements. The Chinese delegation and I myself are deeply touched and would like to express our gratitude to you and to the ambassadors of Japan and Mongolia. I will indeed convey your sentiments to our Government.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Hu of China. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

I would like to recall that, pursuant to the arrangement agreed by the Conference on Disarmament in 1993, there has been an empty seat among member States with the nameplate of Yugoslavia. In subsequent years, all the countries which have emerged from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have submitted requests to participate in the work of the Conference as non-member States, in accordance with rules 33-35 of the rules of procedure. As you are also aware, from 4 February 2003, the name of Yugoslavia is no longer used by any country. In view of the above, may I take it that the Conference agrees to remove the nameplate of Yugoslavia from among the members of the Conference?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: In connection with the decision that the Conference has just taken, I would like to ask the secretariat of the Conference accordingly to remove the name of Yugoslavia from the annex of the rules of procedure.

I should now like to invite you to take a decision on the request of Serbia and Montenegro to participate as an observer in the work of the Conference during this session. This request is contained in document CD/WP.530/Add.3, which is before you.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite Serbia and Montenegro to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 6 March 2003, at 10 a.m. in this conference room. In accordance with previous practice, the Conference will hear an address from the participants in the annual seminar organized by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

The meeting rose at 12 p.m.