

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 16 March 2004, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Pablo MACEDO (Mexico)

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 951st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the very outset I would like, on behalf of all the delegations to the Conference on Disarmament, to express our profound shock and indignation at the terrorist attack carried out in Madrid last Thursday, in which more than 200 innocent people lost their lives, including a little girl who was barely seven months old. We resolutely condemn this terrorist act and call for its perpetrators and organizers to be brought to justice.

On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, I offer our condolences to the Government and people of Spain and to the families of the victims. I would now invite you to observe a minute of silence in honour of the victims.

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Spain, Ambassador Carlos Miranda.

Mr. MIRANDA (Spain) (translated from Spanish): Above all, Mr. President, I wish to thank you and all those present at this moment, in this room, for this minute of silence and also for your statement on behalf of the Conference. A minute is a short time in life, and the more so in history, but this minute brims with the solidarity of all those who are present here with the victims of this terrorist act in Madrid last Thursday. For me, and I think for everyone, it has been a very moving time, and I shall be reporting this to my authorities. Thank you very much.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): Thank you.

The Conference on Disarmament will today hear addresses by the Honourable Bill Graham, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada; His Excellency Mr. Brian Cowen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland; His Excellency Mr. Reaz Rahman, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh; and Her Excellency Ms. Laila Freivalds, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

The presence of these Ministers among us testifies to the abiding commitment of their Governments to our endeavours and the continued importance that they attach to our forum.

I would now like to extend a warm welcome to the first speaker, the Honourable Bill Graham, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, who will address the Conference. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. GRAHAM (Canada): Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, ladies and gentlemen, and particularly, if I may single you out, the Ambassador of Spain: our thoughts are with you and the Spanish people, and I think it was very appropriate that we took a minute of silence this morning to commemorate the terrible acts on the weekend.

A few weeks ago, I held discussions with seven young Canadian scholars doing graduate work on the issues which concern us here today. From small arms to outer space, their research

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areas covered many of the key non-proliferation and disarmament challenges facing the international community. In meeting them, I was reminded of the importance of our work here for the next generation, and of our collective responsibility to them to make progress on the issues before us. To be sure, unknown dangers will face the next generation; but here in our own time we know the dangers before us and we know what we must do: overcome our differences and work out a robust multilateral security framework, grounded in international law and monitored by effective compliance and verification mechanisms. The students I met with expressed dismay at the slow progress being made toward that goal, and I must say I could only share their concern.

As Canada's Foreign Minister, and previously as Chair of the Canadian Parliament's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, I have worked on these issues for the better part of a decade. During this time, I have closely followed the global non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament agenda and the work of the Conference on Disarmament. When I had the honour to speak to this forum two years ago, I spoke candidly, and I should like to do the same here today. The importance of the Conference and the issues before us demands nothing less.

This Conference is unique in being the only permanent multilateral forum for negotiating arms control and disarmament instruments. In establishing it, the international community demonstrated a clear commitment to binding, legal mechanisms to end proliferation and ensure disarmament.

Less than a decade ago, the Conference's actions reflected a collective will to tackle important issues head-on. Both the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty came to fruition in this forum. Yet for many years now, we have been unable even to agree on a programme of work. Negotiations towards a fissile material cut-off treaty, consideration of pressing nuclear disarmament issues, discussions on options to prevent an arms race in outer space, and negotiation of negative security assurances - all of these urgent projects have been held hostage to a stalemate between a handful of members.

(continued in French)

The stakes of continued inaction are high for us all. Since the Conference last agreed on a programme of work, the security environment has grown vastly more complex. The ownership and control of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems used to be confined to States; but as we now know, there are now non-State actors with access to sophisticated weapons, an interest in acquiring WMD and the clear intent to use these weapons.

There is also evidence that some of the gains we made through decades of hard work are unravelling. Two years ago, I said here that some countries were trying to hide behind multilateral processes and principles of fairness and non-discrimination to cover up their pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. We have recently witnessed revelations of a large network of nuclear traffickers whose client list included States parties to the NPT. The international community must now come to terms with clear evidence that the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime is threatened, both from within and from without.

(Mr. Graham, Canada)

Against this backdrop, it is more important than ever that the Conference approve a programme of work and get back to business. The five Ambassadors' proposal already on the table is reasonable and widely supported, and I urge all of you here to support it as the basis for an agreed programme of work. Last month I wrote to my G-8 colleagues calling on them to share my concerns and to invite them to muster the political will to break the Conference on Disarmament deadlock. Today, it is appropriate that I call upon all of you here to do so as well.

Colleagues, let me remind you why the international environment urgently demands our creativity and commitment. The plain fact is that proliferation that we are now witnessing is undermining our collective security and shaking the foundations of the international legal treaty regime. For the first time in its 35-year history, a State has renounced the Non-Proliferation Treaty. North Korea's actions are a threat to both its immediate neighbours and the international community at large; and our collective response must be unequivocal and direct lest the wrong lessons be drawn by other proliferators.

And of course there are other proliferators out there. As we recently learned, Libya's efforts to amass technology and material for a nuclear weapons development programme were far more advanced than we had suspected. Without excusing this NPT State party from not having respected its treaty commitments, Libya nonetheless does deserve commendation for having realized that these activities were not contributing to its real security and for having taken the decision to dismantle its nuclear and chemical weapons and missile programmes.

As for Iran, another State party to the NPT, its intentions continue to remain unclear. Last year, in response to international scrutiny, Iran admitted to having an extensive programme of undeclared nuclear activities dating back nearly 20 years - activities that should have been reported to the International Atomic Energy Agency and subject to Agency safeguards. IAEA's report of 24 February points to serious outstanding discrepancies and unanswered questions. And since, the statements emanating from this Government have been ambiguous, and there are still many questions concerning its future intentions. Having said that, I am happy, and I am sure that everyone here is very happy, that just yesterday Iran indicated that it will cooperate with the inspectors at the end of the month.

And we also know that Pakistani nuclear scientists sold nuclear weapons know-how to other nations for many years. This situation requires full cooperation between the international community and the Government of Pakistan, to obtain the details of these transfers and uncover the full extent of the multinational network involved.

The fact that determined proliferators were able to circumvent their treaty obligations so easily highlights the extent to which it is urgent to reinforce compliance and verification mechanisms. In certain areas no such mechanism even exists - for example the case of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The time has surely come to recognize that most of the verification and compliance tools that do exist were designed to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction during the cold war, and they must be adapted to today's new security environment. We must strengthen State-to-State compliance and verification mechanisms across the board, and ensure their effectiveness in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors. We also need to strengthen the existing

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multilateral treaty framework with new instruments and tools, and to increase the capabilities of the United Nations as well. I assure you that Canada will be contributing to these efforts on many fronts.

In this respect, I flag the enhanced support we will be giving to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Its Director General has put forward some interesting ideas on the nuclear fuel cycle, and Canada will be looking at these proposals and working with all the authorities involved to promote more such realistic initiatives.

(continued in English)

All of us here should be encouraged that the international community is considering new ways of addressing proliferation threats. The EU's strategy on WMD, President Bush's address last month, and Foreign Secretary Straw's recent speech - all of these demonstrate the concerted political will being mobilized to address proliferation. They also show that there is room for diverse approaches. Joint efforts by like-minded countries are, in the end, no substitute for the Conference on Disarmament and legally binding treaties; but they sometimes become necessary when no other way of taking action on pressing issues can be found. And they can only be effective parts of a comprehensive non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament system.

One such initiative is the Proliferation Security Initiative, aimed at blocking traffic in missiles and weapons of mass destruction. At its fifth plenary meeting in Lisbon earlier this month, PSI participants reaffirmed their determination to respond effectively to the proliferation and trafficking of WMD, their delivery systems and related materials. The Initiative has already been successful in raising international awareness and in fostering international cooperation. Canada is committed to the PSI principles, and we are also committed to ensuring that any PSI activity in which we participate will be fully consistent with international law and our own national legal authorities and obligations. We intend to host a meeting of PSI operational experts in Ottawa next month.

Another of the steps Canada is taking with like-minded partners is the G-8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, which was launched at Kananakis in 2002. As a result of that initiative G-8 Governments and others have committed to raise up to US\$ 20 billion to promote disarmament and non-proliferation, initially in Russia, to prevent the terrorist acquisition of WMD. Canada is providing up to Can\$ 1 billion over the next 10 years, which will help destroy Russia's stockpile of chemical weapons, dispose of its weapons-grade nuclear material, dismantle its decommissioned nuclear submarines, and employ former weapons scientists. In light of this initiative's success in Russia, President Bush recently proposed that the Partnership be expanded to other regions facing significant proliferation threats.

These practical efforts are important disarmament measures that complement the international community's work on non-proliferation. We all know, however, that for non-proliferation to succeed over the long term, it is critical to address the underlying motivations for the acquisition of missiles and WMD. Without progress towards nuclear disarmament, it will be very difficult to keep non-nuclear countries from seeing nuclear weapons

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as a deterrence or even to obtain political prestige. Above all, we must keep in mind the ultimate goal of completely eliminating nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, a goal shared by all of humanity.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is a virtually universal legal instrument with provisions covering the intertwined goals of non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful use. As we prepare for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, Canada will be pressing hard to encourage all States to be faithful to the bargain they made in 1995, a bargain premised upon permanence with accountability. We will encourage States to demonstrate fidelity in deeds and not just words to article VI, to reinforce the linkages between articles III and IV, and to improve the Treaty's functioning and implementation. A return to work by the Conference on Disarmament would, I believe, have a profoundly positive impact on the NPT review process.

The success of the NPT in stopping the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons ultimately depends on the effectiveness of verification provisions in article III. Support for the safeguards system strengthened by IAEA is the measuring stick for gauging that effectiveness. Some may wish to differ, but Canada and others view the comprehensive safeguards agreement and the Additional Protocol as part of the commitment undertaken by all non-nuclear-weapon States to the NPT.

I have to regret, in this regard, that nearly seven years after the approval of the Model Additional Protocol, only 39 countries have brought Additional Protocols into force. Forty-six NPT States parties have not even concluded safeguards agreements. Canada remains committed to working with the Agency and with other nations to encourage universal adherence to safeguards agreements and also to the important Additional Protocols.

We will continue to press for the implementation of the NPT's 13 practical steps on disarmament, agreed by consensus at the 2000 Review Conference. Among these interlinked steps is a call for the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. To date this process has not yet been restarted, despite an agreed negotiating mandate and the acknowledged importance we all attach to the ban of the production of fissile materials. Why should the start of formal talks, such a small step forward, remain so difficult? I must say I find that hard to understand, and I think individuals or people outside the people in this room find it very difficult to understand. After all, under the rule of consensus States cannot be forced to accept a result they consider inimical to their national security. And unless we begin talks, we will never know what ingenious and mutually beneficial solutions our negotiators might discover.

Another disarmament measure Canada supports is an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. Late last year, I wrote to all of my counterparts in States which had not yet ratified the CTBT, urging them to complete this important unfinished business. And we all continue to follow up on these efforts.

Finally, I would like to mention a fundamental Canadian goal, namely a treaty to ban space-based weapons. It would be an eminently sensible part of a CD work programme to establish an ad hoc committee to begin discussing, without any preconditions, how the

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international community can keep outer space weapons-free. Surely it is in the interests of all countries to recognize the importance of a weapons-free outer space for our collective security. So, too, would be discussion of the benefits we all would gain by finding ways of guaranteeing peaceful uses of outer space; for as we know, the growing global public goods provided by communication, navigation and remote-sensing satellites are now central to all our economies.

Canadian thinking - and I am sure this is true of other countries around this room - on outer space has evolved in recent years. We remain firmly opposed to the deployment of weapons in outer space. Yet we also recognize the need to ensure the safety of satellites vital to our security and prosperity. We have therefore developed a new comprehensive approach seeking to integrate space security issues with the international community's need for secure and equitable access to space for peaceful purposes. On 25 and 26 March, this approach will be introduced at a seminar entitled "Safeguarding space for all", sponsored by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, as well as key non-governmental organizations and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs. I hope that many of you here today will be able to attend that event and lend your support and expertise to it.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Canada's view that the architecture of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament is an indispensable pillar of national security for our own country and, we believe, all others. Global security has to be enhanced by absolute prohibitions on chemical and biological weapons. Despite its recent setbacks, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has curtailed the spread of nuclear weapons and articulated an international commitment to their total elimination. And the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty will lessen the risk that nuclear weapons will be tested, and thereby deployed.

To be sure, inaction at this Conference is cause for grave concern, but we must also remind ourselves that even recently we have found areas for cooperation, such as the negotiations concluded on a Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War. Outside this forum, we can look forward to the upcoming Nairobi Summit on a Mine-free World, where we can sustain the progress made in the global fight against landmines since the Ottawa Convention was opened in 1997. Canada welcomes new commitments to humanitarian mine action programmes, such as the increased financial commitment recently announced by the United States, and we will continue working with our American colleagues to encourage them to adopt policies consistent with the international standard set by the Ottawa Convention.

In conclusion, I would like to cite the words of the Canadian Prime Minister, Paul Martin. In a speech at Davos last month, he stressed that "No one nation can manage the consequences of interdependence on its own ... We need multilateral institutions that work". This is a commitment of Canada. The Conference on Disarmament may have its deficiencies, but its history demonstrates that it can function to address pressing security needs for the benefit of all of our citizens. What is needed is the political will to get back to our work. I therefore, in conclusion, would appeal to all of you, and to the Governments you represent: let us waste time no longer. Let us put divisions behind us, rise to the challenges we face. There are younger generations we are accountable to, and only in constructive action can we fulfil the responsibilities we carry to make their lives and their futures more secure.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada for his statement.

I now suspend the plenary meeting for a few minutes, and I would ask you to remain seated while I escort His Excellency the Minister out of the Council Chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 10.35 a.m. and resumed at 10.40 a.m.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I have the honour to welcome His Excellency Mr. Brian Cowen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, who will address the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. COWEN (Ireland): There is a particular resonance for me in speaking here today in this Council Chamber, which was constructed to house, as we know, the League of Nations. Ireland's security policy was born out of our experience of the League of Nations. Having joined the League as a small, newly independent country, we came to believe that our security could best be assured through an effective system of collective security which sought to prevent conflict and which should be resolute in addressing aggression. Regrettably, by the time this building was completed, the organization it had been built to accommodate had been unable to prevent the descent into global war.

The new multilateral system which arose in 1945, based upon the United Nations Charter, while imperfect, has had greater success and can lay claim to greater legitimacy in upholding respect for the rule of law in relations between States. Ireland has been a strong supporter of the role of the United Nations in conflict prevention and in peacekeeping. Recent events have demonstrated the limitations and weakness of the Organization. They have also demonstrated the unique legitimacy that the United Nations brings to the pursuit of international peace and security. We cannot do without it

The Conference on Disarmament can have an important role to play in the multilateral efforts to maintain international peace and security. Ireland's approach to disarmament is rooted in a firm conviction that multilateral cooperation is in the interest of all and most particularly serves the interests of smaller States who, lacking military power, must rely on building and supporting a strong rules-based system. We have placed our faith in the multilateral regime of disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements. We are committed to implementing and strengthening these instruments and to pursuing the universalization of their norms.

The European Union, over which Ireland is honoured to preside at present, has put a commitment to effective multilateralism at the centre of its common foreign and security policy. A rules-based international order and strong international institutions are of fundamental importance to the European Union.

(Mr. Cowen, Ireland)

Effective multilateralism means a commitment to work with others to resolve the root causes of conflict, to promote respect for human rights and to create the machinery for resolving difference by peaceful means. Disarmament and arms control are essential elements in conflict prevention in mitigating the impact of war and in addressing the problems of post-conflict situations.

Ireland's own experience of conflict has taught us that so-called conventional weapons cause terror, misery and suffering. Our experience is mirrored in many other situations which testify even more emphatically to the damage resulting from the trade in small arms and light weapons. Progress in dealing with the misuse of these weapons will be slow, but it must be given greater priority. The negotiations which will get under way this summer on tracing and marking of small arms and light weapons should result in an agreement on a legally binding instrument to strengthen controls and to alleviate the devastating impact of these weapons worldwide.

Post-conflict situations are frequently characterized by the continuing casualties of war. Children, women and men going about their everyday business have too often become victims of landmines and other discarded remnants of war. Governments encouraged by the support of civil society have made progress in dealing with this issue. This year we commemorate the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines. Later this year the Nairobi Review Conference will provide an opportunity to take stock of the progress that has been made and will enable us to consider how to achieve universal respect for the principles and application of that treaty

In a difficult period for arms control, the successful outcome of negotiations on an additional protocol to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is greatly welcomed. Ireland was glad to have been able to organize a Conference on the topic of Explosive Remnants of War and Development in Dublin from 23 to 25 April last year. The agreement to address the explosive remnants of war represents a significant step forward and will hopefully provide momentum for other issues which need to be tackled in that framework.

Conventional weapons may have killed far more people, but it is the proliferation and possible use of weapons of mass destruction which causes greatest fear. Their potential to destroy our world demands more effective and urgent action towards their elimination. The international community must strengthen their efforts to prevent their further proliferation and the danger that these weapons could fall into the hands of terrorists.

Next month the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will meet. In 1958 one of my predecessors as Irish Foreign Minister, Mr. Frank Aiken, put forward a proposal for such a treaty. When it was opened for signature Ireland was privileged to have been the first country to sign and to ratify the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Since then efforts to strengthen the Treaty and to ensure respect for all its provisions has been our highest priority in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The NPT has been subjected to severe strains in recent years. Like others, we deplore the announcement made by the DPRK to withdraw from the NPT last year. We continue to urge the

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DPRK to dismantle immediately any nuclear weapons programme in a visible and verifiable and irreversible manner, to allow the return of IAEA inspectors, and to come into full and unconditional compliance with all relevant international obligations, in particular the NPT and their IAEA Safeguards Agreement.

Concerns have also arisen about the nuclear programmes of a number of other countries. The possession of nuclear weapons by States outside of the NPT and non-compliance with the Treaty's provisions by States parties to the Treaty risk undermining multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.

There is a tendency for some members of the Treaty to stress its non-proliferation aspects to the neglect of the disarmament provisions of the NPT. I am firmly convinced that disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing. Above all, we might consider that what does not exist cannot proliferate. The development of new types or new uses for nuclear weapons is unlikely to inspire a sense of confidence. On the contrary, it suggests that the taboo on the use of such weapons could be weakened.

Preserving the integrity of the NPT means respecting all its provisions and the commitments freely undertaken at Review Conferences. The progress which can be achieved by the NPT States parties, if there is sufficient political will, was evident in the conclusions of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, which provided a realistic blueprint for achieving nuclear disarmament. Ireland, together with our New Agenda Coalition partners, worked hard to achieve that outcome. The 13 Practical Steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI were agreed by consensus and include an unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapons States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

A rules-based system is one respected by all. A consensus agreement, such as the 2000 Final Document, imposes particular responsibilities and retains a particular legitimacy.

The 2000 Final Document also includes commitments on non-proliferation, including in the area of safeguards. The Conference specifically endorsed the measures of the Model Additional Protocol approved by the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors. Ireland believes that an Additional Protocol is now an essential element of any effective safeguards regime. Ireland together with all other EU member States has completed the necessary national measures for the entry into force of such Protocols. I would urge all States, regardless of the size or nature of their nuclear programme, which have not yet signed and ratified an Additional Protocol to do so. This would be an important demonstration of their commitment to the NPT.

There is a fundamental link between the objectives of the NPT and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, which was the last major agreement to be negotiated in this forum. Ireland continues to see the CTBT as one of the fundamental building steps on the road to nuclear disarmament. Eight years after its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly, and despite the support of an overwhelming number of United Nations Member States, the Treaty has yet to secure the support required in order for it to enter into force.

(Mr. Cowen, Ireland)

In recognition of the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction, the European Union adopted a strategy on the non-proliferation of such weapons at the European Council meeting last December. We are agreed that non-proliferation should be mainstreamed into our overall policies drawing upon all the resources and instruments available to the Union. We are working to support the multilateral institutions charged with verification and upholding compliance with the treaties. Furthermore, we are committed to strong national and internationally coordinated export controls as a necessary complement to the treaty system.

Support for multilateral instruments must translate into support for effective compliance with their provisions. For this reason, Ireland supports an effective compliance and verification instrument for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We recognize the work which has been done by the meetings of State parties last year, and welcome the focus on effective national measures to ensure the full implementation of the provisions of the Treaty. As part of the EU strategy on weapons of mass destruction, we are working with our partners to secure the universalization of the Treaty.

The Chemical Weapons Convention also provides for a ban on this category of weapons of mass destruction. The possible existence of chemical weapons in countries which are not party to the Convention is a source of concern, and with our EU partners we will continue to promote the universalization of the Convention also.

The Conference on Disarmament has made - in the past - an outstanding contribution in the area of arms control and disarmament. The present inaction is in stark contrast to that proud past. Since joining the Conference in 1999, we have seen no work of any significance take place here.

The reasons for the impasse are obvious. A political consensus is lacking on the next steps to be taken in the multilateral arena on arms control and disarmament issues.

We should not permit our work here to be held hostage to any single issue. Yet it should be possible to find agreement which will reflect common concerns.

For our part, Ireland supports the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of a subsidiary body to deal specifically with the issue of nuclear disarmament. We believe that the CD should commence negotiations on a treaty dealing with fissile material. We see merit in embarking on a process which could eventually lead to an agreement on the non-weaponization of outer space. At the same time we are realistic and appreciate that this body is unlikely to start negotiations across a wide range of issues at the same time.

If this Conference cannot yet give expression to a political consensus on future negotiations, it surely can play a role in creating the shared understanding which must be the basis of any such consensus. Structured discussions on each item of the agenda of the Conference could build understanding of complex issues and appreciation of each other's concerns. This can only lead to greater trust, which must be the basis of any negotiation.

(Mr. Cowen, Ireland)

The Conference should also reflect on the relevance of its methods of work in today's world. I find it hard to believe, much less understand, how a body charged with a mandate of such relevance to humankind and drawing its funding from the United Nations can continue to effectively exclude civil society from a meaningful role in its deliberations. Nor can I understand the exclusivity with which the Conference guards its membership. While your membership includes some with modest engagement with multilateral disarmament treaties, others who are staunch upholders of the multilateral disarmament system are denied entry. Amongst the latter, I would include member States of the European Union and acceding States whose admission has been blocked here for many years.

The issue of legitimacy underpins respect for multilateral action. We must remember that if we want an effective multilateral system we must all contribute meaningfully to it. The multilateral system is supposed to be, and must be, about empowerment and ownership. We are all responsible for finding shared solutions and for playing our part in implementing them.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland for his statement. I now suspend the plenary meeting for a few minutes and ask you to remain in your seats while I escort the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland out of the Council Chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11.05 a.m.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I am very pleased to welcome to His Excellency, Mr. Reaz Rahman, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, who will address the Conference. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. RAHMAN (Bangladesh): I am truly privileged to address the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. Over the years, this forum has not only proven effective and relevant in the field of arms control and nuclear disarmament, but has immensely contributed to global peace and security. It is our hope that we will be able to renew meaningful progress in the work of the Conference and build upon the solid achievements of the past.

Bangladesh's support for general and complete disarmament is total and unswerving. It is a constitutional commitment. We are party to almost all disarmament-related treaties, including the NPT, the CTBT, the CWC, the CCW, the APMT and the BWC. We attach great importance to strict adherence, non-discriminatory enforcement and verification of their respective goals. We shall continue to contribute to all endeavours leading to general and complete disarmament, partial or otherwise.

Nuclear weapons constitute the single most dangerous threat to mankind. For the past three and a half decades, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has been the most important and widely accepted instrument for preventing the spread of nuclear arms. Today, it is faced with serious challenges that can unravel the whole process.

(Mr. Rahman, Bangladesh)

As a State party to the NPT, Bangladesh has consciously given up its option to go nuclear. Furthermore, it is a measure of some importance that we are the first country in South Asia to sign the CTBT. These steps are tangible testimony to our constitutional commitment towards general and complete disarmament.

In our own region, we welcome the resumption of dialogue between our two nuclear neighbours. Their face-off had dire spillover implications for all countries in the subcontinent who had a legitimate concern to end it. It is our sincere hope that they will move towards strengthening measures for durable peace in South Asia.

We welcomed the entry into force in June last year of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States. Although this treaty does not fully compensate for the abrogation of the ABM Treaty, it is an important development in nuclear disarmament. We continue to hold that it is only the total elimination of nuclear weapons that can provide an absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The 1995 NPT Review Conference called for the early commencement and conclusion of negotiations on an FMCT, which constitutes an important step forward in the non-proliferation context. Bangladesh supports the negotiating mandate for a non-discriminatory, multilateral and international and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. Negotiations should extend to existing stockpiles, without which any such treaty will be incomplete.

We believe it is vitally important to address the undertakings agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference for the effective implementation of the NPT. In this context nuclear-weapon States have special responsibilities to shoulder. We are disappointed that very little progress has been achieved towards the elimination of nuclear armaments despite the unequivocal undertaking given by the nuclear-weapon States at the 2000 Review Conference.

Lack of progress in the full implementation of the 13 practical steps identified by the 2000 Review Conference has also been disheartening. We would like all States parties to the NPT to reaffirm their full commitment to that programme of action and to make genuine efforts towards its implementation. Together, we must pursue in earnest the all-important goal of general and complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control, as required by article VI of the NPT.

Bangladesh strongly supports regional approaches to nuclear disarmament, including the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South Asia, in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. We believe this will greatly contribute to regional confidence-building measures and reduce threats to the security of non-nuclear-weapons States.

We are deeply concerned at the changes in nuclear policy of certain nuclear-weapon countries to ease out of their commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapons States. The unilateral pledge of nuclear-weapons States, reaffirmed by Security Council resolution 984 (1995), has been an important element for States to forgo the nuclear option, thereby contributing positively towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

(Mr. Rahman, Bangladesh)

Non-nuclear States parties to the NPT have a legitimate right to receive an unconditional assurance from the nuclear-weapons States that they will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them. It is, therefore critically important that renewed and vigorous efforts are taken on a priority basis to conclude a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to provide security assurances to non-nuclear-weapons States. This, we believe, would securely anchor the non-proliferation regime.

Outer space is the common heritage of humankind. It is the desire of the global community that outer space be explored only for peaceful purposes and for the welfare and benefit of humankind. The militarization of outer space could lead to an arms race which, we believe, would be detrimental to global peace and stability. The onus lies on countries that have the capability to reach outer space to ensure that outer space is used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

We are convinced that the prevention of an arms race in outer space is possible only through a legally binding international instrument. We hope there will be an early commencement of negotiations for an international legally binding treaty to prevent deployment of arms in outer space.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention banning the use of anti-personnel landmines. Bangladesh is the only country in South Asia which is party to the Convention. For us, this constitutes yet another bold step, as none of our neighbours have joined the Convention. This accords with our humanitarian commitment to eliminate the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines. We remain fully committed to the core humanitarian objectives of the Convention. We will soon be starting the destruction of existing stockpiles of landmines in our country, and hope to complete the process of the destruction of stockpiles before our deadline of March 2005.

The universalization of the Convention remains a major challenge for the global community. There are some encouraging signs. It is heartening to note that 141 countries have joined the Convention. We believe the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines should be the single most compelling reason to encourage the remaining few to join the Convention. We appeal to them to do so.

Small arms and light weapons cause massive humanitarian suffering all around the world. It is estimated that more than 500,000 people die each year from wounds caused by light firearms, making it one of the most deadly killers prevalent today. Of them, 90 per cent are civilians, and 50 per cent are children, while 30 per cent are women. There are more weapons in the hands of civilians than those of legitimate armed forces. Moreover, the free availability of light weapons makes it easy to give them to children, thereby aggravating the incidence of child soldiers.

The focus should be on eliminating the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons through effective implementation of the Programme of Action drawn up in 2001. The first biennial meeting to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in July 2003 provided an opportunity

(Mr. Rahman, Bangladesh)

to build an effective international and regional partnership to deal with the problem. We believe that it is only through greater political commitment and closer cooperation, regionally as well as internationally, that this problem can be addressed effectively. The momentum gained in 2003 must be maintained.

For us, development is the priority. It is our strong conviction that the Millennium Development Goals can best be achieved through reduction of military expenditure and diversion of resources to poverty eradication and sustained confidence-building measures through international political cooperation. A renewed effort is needed to reverse the trend of increasing military expenditure by major military Powers. Such military expenditure over the last few years has crossed the \$800 billion mark globally in current dollar terms. But we cannot say if such an increased arms build-up and increased military expenditure has made the world any safer. On the other hand, even if a small part of the huge military expenditure is diverted to social and economic development, we can free the world population from the scourge of poverty and make it a safer place to live. The linkage between the peace dividend and the global fund for poverty eradication should be seriously pursued.

Bangladesh is deeply concerned over the continued impasse in the Conference on Disarmament. The work of the Conference has remained stalled for a number of years. Such an impasse gives rise to speculation about its effectiveness and relevance. We must act now to prevent such erosion. We must rise above our individual interests for the collective safety and security of humankind. It would be unfortunate if we did not make genuine efforts to put the CD back on track.

The Conference has before it the proposal of the five distinguished past Presidents of the CD. The A-5 proposal, as it has come to be popularly known, represents a cross-regional initiative for a programme of work for the CD. The proposal does not necessarily meet all expectations. But we must not forgo the “good” in search of the “best”. This may never happen. In our view, the proposal seems balanced and a good basis for reaching a consensus.

The Conference on Disarmament is under close scrutiny of the international community. It must live up to its expectations. Let us give it a chance to be relevant through concrete actions. We must forge together a collective political resolve to make the world a more peaceful, secure and safer place to live.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank His Excellency the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh for his statement. I now suspend the meeting for a few minutes and, once again, I ask you to remain in your seats while I escort the Minister out of the Council Chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): It is a privilege for me to welcome Her Excellency Ms. Laila Freivalds, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, and to give her the floor to address the Conference. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. FREIVALDS (Sweden): Let me begin by saying that the terrorist attack in Madrid is an attack not only against the Spanish people, but also against democracy and all the values that we stand for and defend. I once again convey my deepest condolences to the victims of this tragedy, to their families and to the Spanish Government.

I am pleased to address the Conference on Disarmament under the presidency of Mexico. Sweden and Mexico have often worked closely together on matters on the CD's agenda. Sweden will support you, Sir, in any effort you will make to exert the prerogatives of the President to reinvigorate this once so capable negotiating forum, so that once again it can shoulder its responsibilities.

It is not acceptable that while concern mounts about serious developments in the world, while joint multilateral and global efforts are more needed than ever, the Conference on Disarmament is left by the wayside, contributing nothing.

Special efforts are called for. Nuclear-weapons States have a special responsibility not to prevent this forum from seriously addressing nuclear concerns. And all States must make efforts to allow work to begin where work is possible, even if this might mean that all members might not be ready to deal with all the important issues at the same time. If a first step is not taken, there will be no second or third step either.

Lately, a series of revelations about illicit programmes of weapons of mass destruction and attempts at proliferation have occurred. To this is added the networks of international terrorists and the fears that they might acquire weapons of mass destruction. These situations pose a grave threat to us all, and we must promptly join forces to redress the present state of affairs.

Every case of clandestine weapons of mass destruction must be urgently dealt with. All attempts at proliferation must be countered. The world must be free from weapons of mass destruction. Existing international arms control and disarmament regimes must be complied with and made universal. Our possibilities to detect, at an early stage, non-compliance must be strengthened through the effective use of existing verification arrangements and by devising new complementary mechanisms. Additional international norms and legal instruments must be negotiated, where lacunae exist. And important lacunae do exist.

Against the background of these overall policy considerations I will now address some of the issues involved.

Weapons of mass destruction have lately come into the focus of attention of international leaders and policy makers. In Iraq questions remain about Saddam Hussein's weapons programmes. The nuclear programme in the DPRK causes grave concern. Sweden hopes that the six-party talks will bring the DPRK back into full compliance with the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapons State, allowing IAEA to verify the complete and irreversible dismantling of the nuclear programme. Iran has signed the Additional Protocol and improved its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. This is welcome. However, reports of certain omissions in Iran's declaration on its nuclear programme have caused concern. Iran needs to

(Ms. Freivalds, Sweden)

show full transparency vis-à-vis the continued efforts of IAEA to resolve all outstanding questions. Developments in Libya have helped to unravel a network of proliferators selling nuclear-weapons materials to the highest bidder. Libya's decision to bring to a close, under international verification, its programmes of weapons of mass destruction is, however, a most welcome development.

While these developments raise serious concerns about weapons of mass destruction as a real threat to us all, they also demonstrate that diplomacy and a united international community working together can bring about positive results. As awareness has increased, so have the efforts to prevent and stop the spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

Last year Sweden initiated a discussion within the European Union on how its policy on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction could be strengthened. Last December the EU adopted a strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Multilateralism is at the core of this strategy. Cooperation with other States and organizations is a key point, and meeting the challenge of proliferation will be a central element in the EU's external policy.

The strategy covers a wide spectrum of measures. Using the instruments at its disposal, the EU will work with resolve to implement and universalize disarmament and non-proliferation norms and treaties, to reinforce compliance with them and to strengthen export controls. The EU will also support the establishment of additional international verification instruments.

A world free of weapons of mass destruction is a long-standing priority for Sweden. For non-proliferation policies to be effective, credible and sustainable, disarmament is also necessary. Disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing. While there has been real progress towards the complete elimination of biological and chemical weapons, the same does not hold true for nuclear weapons. Instead, we see a trend towards increased emphasis on nuclear weapons as part of security strategies and signs that a new generation of nuclear weapons might be in the making. Such pursuits would undermine the credibility of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and could prompt a new arms race.

To further address the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, the Swedish Government has established an independent international commission on these weapons. We expect the commission, led by Dr. Hans Blix, to give new impetus to international work on disarmament and non-proliferation and to make new recommendations.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, the foundation for nuclear disarmament and for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The 2005 NPT Review Conference will be crucial. And the outcome must be a strengthened regime. Lessons must be learned from the DPRK, Iran and Libya.

(Ms. Freivalds, Sweden)

With the NPT, five States were given a temporary right to possess nuclear weapons on the condition that they were to dismantle their nuclear arsenals. These five States have made a binding undertaking to disarm. For the sake of making our world a safer place and for the sake of the NPT, they must honour their commitment. And other States must refrain from acquiring and developing nuclear weapons.

Eliminating non-strategic nuclear weapons would be a decisive measure to prevent terrorism by nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the character of non-strategic nuclear weapons is such that military planners could be tempted to consider them usable as battlefield weapons. Blurring the lines between conventional weapons and non-strategic nuclear weapons would lower the threshold against the use of nuclear weapons. A binding and verifiable disarmament agreement on non-strategic nuclear weapons should be negotiated.

I want to reiterate Sweden's call for the implementation of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and especially the commitment regarding the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. The entry into force of the CTBT should not be delayed further. Putting an end to nuclear testing would raise the threshold for the acquisition of nuclear weapons and would help prevent a qualitative arms race. I therefore call on those States that have not yet done so to adhere to the Treaty as soon as possible.

It is also high time that negotiations are allowed to begin on a treaty that would end the production of fissile material, the key component of nuclear weapons. By negotiating such a treaty, the Conference on Disarmament can make a major contribution. I call on all States here represented not to delay this any further.

The NPT, with its near-universal membership, is part of international law and should be respected as such also by countries that have yet to accede to it. I call upon India, Israel and Pakistan to respect the norms of the Treaty pending their accession to it as non-nuclear-weapons States.

The right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy is an essential part of the NPT. And the IAEA safeguards are necessary companions to that right. Recent events have demonstrated the vital importance of the Additional Protocols. They provide IAEA with the necessary enhanced means and authority to verify that States comply with their non-proliferation commitments.

The Convention on Chemical Weapons prescribes the real disarmament of a whole category of weapons of mass destruction. But the task is still not completed. Chemical weapons destruction work must proceed at the most rapid pace possible. We need to continue our work towards the effective implementation of the Convention. We must also ensure that all States join the Convention. There is no reason why a State with nothing to hide should stay outside.

It is alarming that terrorists are taking an interest in biological weapons. This calls for a strengthened international approach to the non-proliferation of biological weapons and related materials and technology. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention must be given more teeth and a mechanism for verification. Sweden supports all efforts to strengthen the BTWC regime, by the European Union, by the International Committee of the Red Cross and by others.

(Ms. Freivalds, Sweden)

Access to long-range ballistic missiles in combination with technology and know-how regarding weapons of mass destruction gives cause for considerable concern. The international code of conduct on missile proliferation that was launched in 2002 is the only multilateral instrument that deals with ballistic missiles. This code should be turned into a legally binding instrument accompanied by measures for verification of compliance. As a first step, I call on all States to accede to the Code.

Let us not forget that conventional weapons also constantly pose a threat to the lives of many people around the world. Terrorists and criminals profit from the easy flow of small arms, which also fuels local and regional conflicts and undermines the fabrics of fragile societies.

Combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a crucial part of our efforts to improve security. Export controls, including the control of arms dealers, increased transparency in the arms trade and the marking and tracing of arms are areas where we need to strengthen international norms.

There is an inherent relationship between security and sustainable development. We need a coherent approach to conflict prevention and to the reconstruction of war-torn countries.

Sweden welcomes the adoption last November of a protocol on explosive remnants of war to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The protocol is at present before the Swedish Parliament for consideration.

Nevertheless, further work is needed to increase the protection of civilians, not least by preventing munitions, including submunitions, from becoming explosive remnants of war. Sweden will continue to pursue this issue within the CCW process.

Five years after the entry into force of the Mine Ban Treaty, more than 140 countries have joined the Convention and more than 31 million mines have been destroyed. This is an achievement. But innocent civilians are still maimed and killed by anti-personnel mines. In order to rid the world of the human suffering caused by anti-personnel mines, the treaty has to become truly universal. The Swedish Government therefore regrets the recent decision by the United States to pursue its landmine policy outside the framework of this important Convention. The first review conference in Nairobi later this year must give a strong political commitment to the universality of the Convention.

We are faced with real threats to global, regional, local and human security. These are global challenges that can only be met through joint efforts. Our future depends on our abilities to work together. It depends on effective multilateralism. The world cannot afford that the single multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations remains idle. It is urgent that the deadlock in this body, the Conference on Disarmament, is broken.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank Her Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden for her statement and for the very kind words she addressed to the Chair. I now suspend the plenary meeting and once again ask you to remain in your seats while I accompany Her Excellency the Minister out of the Council Chamber.

The meeting was suspended at 11.45 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): Distinguished delegates, now that the visits by the Ministers are complete, I would like you to allow me to make a brief opening statement on taking the Chair of the Conference.

First of all, I would like on behalf of my delegation to reiterate our deepest condolences to Ambassador Carlos Miranda of Spain in connection with the terrible events that took place last week in Madrid. I would like to express our full solidarity with the people and Government of Spain at this difficult time, and to reiterate that my Government strongly condemns these acts.

It is a great honour for my country and for me personally to take the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament today. For my country, because this is a new opportunity to promote the cause of disarmament from a privileged position. For me, because the first post I occupied in my diplomatic career was precisely that of a member of the delegation of Mexico to this Conference 21 years ago.

Very distinguished diplomats have represented my country in this forum, among whom I will mention only Antonio de Icaza, Miguel Marín, Manuel Tello and, in particular, my teacher, Alfonso García Robles, the Nobel Peace Prize winner. It is a great challenge to try to follow in their footsteps.

My country's record in the field of disarmament is based on the firm conviction that the mere existence of nuclear weapons is a serious threat to international peace and security. Nuclear disarmament continues to be a priority, and will continue to be so until these devices of mass destruction are completely eliminated.

When I came to know the Conference on Disarmament in 1983, it was carrying out its mandate with dedication as the sole multilateral body for negotiation in the field of disarmament. The international agreements to which our efforts gave rise contributed, and continue to contribute, to international peace and security. I am sad to see that now we are facing a critical situation of stagnation, which jeopardizes the credibility that our Conference should not lose.

I am aware that major achievements are always expected of the President in office, as it is felt that his initiatives can eventually overcome inertia. I shall take my responsibilities seriously, but it will be indispensable for me to have the firm support and political will of all delegations if we are to break the vicious circle and cut the Gordian knot which is paralysing the Conference.

I would like to express my thanks to my two immediate predecessors, Ambassadors Amina Mohamed of Kenya and Rajmah Hussain of Malaysia, for their excellent work during their terms of office. It is my intention to continue to move forward along the path they traced during their terms.

The adoption of a programme of work continues to be our priority. I shall devote my efforts to pursuing this objective, which is one that apparently we all share but which, unfortunately, we have not managed to achieve.

(The President)

From our informal consultations last week, it is clear to me that the five Ambassadors' initiative enjoys very broad support, but it is also clear that some delegations are still not ready to join in a consensus on that basis.

I have every intention of continuing consultations with a view to the adoption of a programme of work. In addition to those activities, until such time as we have managed to overcome our differences, I intend to present to the Conference shortly an interim programme of work based on the elements of the approved agenda, so as to enable us to take up its various items in a systematic fashion. I am convinced that by exchanging views on the agenda items in that format we can smooth the path towards the adoption of a definitive programme of work.

I now invite you to take joint action to reactivate the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Let us demonstrate political will so as to give a dynamic and vigorous impetus to multilateralism in the field of disarmament. Let us redouble our efforts to overcome the present stagnation, whose persistence is becoming unacceptable.

This concludes my list of speakers for today.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I recognize the distinguished representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Umer.

Mr. UMER (Pakistan): Mr. President, we have a lot of hope from what was just said about your determination to move the programme of work forward and to explore all avenues for reviving this stultified Conference. And I join you, of course, in conveying our condolences to our friend from Spain for the terrible event which took place in that country a few days ago.

Now, Mr. President, you mentioned a concept which is rather new to me, of an interim programme of work. What exactly is meant by an interim programme of work? What would be its ingredients? What would be its basis? What would be its framework? How will it be conducted? If you could shed some light on it, we can reflect on this important idea.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Pakistan. Of course, the interim programme of work that I will be proposing has as its basis the items of the agenda that have already been approved, and what would be proposed would be to try to deal systematically with each of these items in a format that we will determine subsequently.

I would ask the distinguished representative of Pakistan to bear with me and to await the outcome that I will be distributing shortly to the members of the Conference for consideration. We should not forget that Mexico's term of office is beginning today but continues until the end of May, so we have time.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has the floor.

Mr. JANG (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. President, I would first of all like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and wish you success in discharging your responsibility.

My delegation also joins others in expressing condolences to the victims of the bombs in Spain.

In exercising the right to reply, I would like to react to what the Honourable Foreign Ministers of Canada, Ireland and Sweden have mentioned in their statements with regard to non-compliance with obligations under the NPT by the DPRK.

As already known, the DPRK pulled out of the NPT on 11 January last year as a measure to defend its sovereignty and vital right. One of the reasons for our withdrawal from the NPT lies in the impartiality of IAEA, which has been misused against its member State.

With that withdrawal from the NPT, the DPRK was completely free from the binding force of the Safeguards Agreement with IAEA, according to article III of the Treaty. Therefore, holding the DPRK in this multilateral negotiating forum liable to comply with their obligations under the NPT is not right and fair conduct in legal terms. And it can even be regarded as pressure upon us.

The denuclearizing of the Korean peninsula was initiated by the DPRK, and we are now making efforts to this end. Our efforts and flexible proposals to settle the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula in a peaceful way through negotiations are among them. We want peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

Proceeding from this stand, the DPRK set forth fair and flexible proposals to resolve the nuclear issue in a negotiated peaceful manner in the second round of six-way talks held in Beijing last month. However, these talks ended regrettably with no substantial results, as the participating countries expected.

We believe that nuclear non-proliferation can only be meaningfully sustained if the non-nuclear-weapon States themselves are assured under legally binding commitments that their independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty would be safeguarded against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. This feeling is shared by many countries in this chamber, and this is the reason why the majority of the member States of the Conference raised their voices insisting that legally binding international arrangements to assure unconditionally non-nuclear-weapons States against the use of threat of use of nuclear weapons and aiming at the total elimination of all nuclear weapons should be secured.

Therefore, if those countries which have urged us to comply with obligations under the NPT are really concerned with nuclear non-proliferation, they, I think, should call for giving up the adoption of an egoistic attitude and double standards on the issue of non-proliferation before making an unfair and one-sided demand on this issue.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation wish to take the floor? If not, I shall take it that we have concluded our business for today.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held tomorrow, Wednesday, 17 March, at 11 a.m., I repeat 11 a.m., in this room. As you have already been informed, at that meeting the Conference will have the privilege of being addressed by His Excellency Mr. Bernard Rudolf Bot, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. I ask you to be punctual tomorrow for that meeting.

The meeting rose at noon.