

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.968
7 September 2004

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 7 September 2004, at 10.15 a.m.

President:

Mr. Mya THAN

(Myanmar)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 968th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Last week we were following closely the tragic situation of the hostage siege at the school in Beslan in southern Russia. Last Thursday we learned with great sorrow that the hostage siege had ended with more than 330 people dead, including many children and parents. I should like to stress here that terrorist acts against a civilian population must be resolutely condemned by all of us. There ought not to be any havens for terrorists, nor should they go unpunished. They ought to be brought to justice for their dastardly acts of terrorism.

On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as on my own, I should like to extend our sincerest condolences to the bereaved families of the victims and to the Government of the Russian Federation for this tragic incident.

Let us now observe one minute of silence for the victims of the Beslan tragedy.

* * *

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

Mr. SKOTNIKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, I thank you for your condolences following this further terrorist attack on Russia which caused many human deaths, including the deaths of children. I thank the entire Conference for the sympathy they have expressed.

The last days of August and the beginning of September have been tragic for many citizens of Russia and our country as a whole. Bombs exploded on the streets of Moscow, aeroplanes blew up in the Russian skies and, finally, this monstrous crime in Beslan, which has thrown all mankind into shock.

As President Putin stressed, we are dealing here not just with individual acts of intimidation or isolated attacks by terrorists. We are dealing with the direct intervention of international terror against Russia, a total, brutal and full-scale war, which, again and again, is taking the lives of our compatriots. In these circumstances we simply cannot and must not live in such a carefree way as we did before.

The terrorists will not succeed in frightening us, and the necessary conclusions will be drawn. The Russian authorities are concerned to enhance people's security. The integrity of our country will be reliably protected. International cooperation is vitally important in international efforts to combat terrorism. Terrorism is not bad or good. It is a union of inhumanity, and we can only fight against it together. We all need firmness and genuine international solidarity which is manifested in the form of action.

We shall transmit your condolences to the families and relatives of those who died. Once again, I thank you.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Skotnikov of the Russian Federation for his statement.

Today I have on my list of speakers the following speakers: Ambassador David Broucher of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Christian Faessler of Switzerland, Ambassador Juan Martabit of Chile, Ambassador Dembri of Algeria, Ms. Sabine Taufmann of Germany, Ambassador Jackie Sanders of the United States of America and Ambassador Carlo Trezza of Italy. I now give the floor to Ambassador David Broucher of the United Kingdom.

Mr. BROUCHER (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Like most colleagues who have a distant recollection of a time when the CD was an important working institution, I assumed when I arrived here in 2001 that getting the Conference back to work was simply a matter of trying harder. Three years on, I know better. But it is, I think, a forgivable error, because what is needed to get the CD back to work does seem pretty obvious. Why, then, does it not happen? I think it is because, as my previous Canadian colleague once said, we go on spinning the wheels in the same rut.

In consequence there are those who argue for shutting the CD down. They think that the main work of arms control has now been accomplished, and that with the important gains we have made since the end of the cold war, there is now little left to do. I beg to disagree. The CD is an effective barometer of the international situation, and it is at a low point because that is now deeply clouded. The barriers to progress are summed up in two statements I have heard recently. In one, a delegate described the first, second and third priorities of his Government as being "nuclear disarmament". In another, a delegate said that nuclear disarmament was yesterday's issue. The priority was counter-proliferation and counter-terrorism.

How are we to reconcile these two very different opinions on the state of international security? The difference does, of course, underline the fact that perceptions of security are highly subjective. One country's security may be another country's threat. Personally I think there may be more to the problem of international security than is dreamt of in either philosophy.

Our common objective is a world in which international peace and security can be maintained at lower levels of armament, and consequently at lower levels of risk and cost. In the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom and France, doctrines based on the presumption of nuclear use have declined and so have the numbers of deployed weapons. But elsewhere we are still a long way from achieving the same trend, and each new nuclear-weapon State that emerges takes us one more step away from it. In that sense, it must be obvious that preventing further proliferation is the highest priority.

So the greatest contribution that non-nuclear-weapon States can make to nuclear disarmament is to continue to renounce nuclear weapons and to make sure their partners do the same. Since relying on good intentions will not be enough, we need to go on building the highest barriers we can to the transfer of nuclear weapons know-how and technology. The

(Mr. Broucher, United Kingdom)

greatest contribution the existing nuclear-weapon States can make is to refrain from testing, manufacturing fissile material and go on reducing their arsenals, where they have not done so already, to the minimum level.

But that is not the end of the story. I am well aware that the pressure for progress towards the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament will not go away. It remains a very real and pressing concern for a large number of countries. So much so that States with nuclear ambitions increasingly try to justify their intentions by reference to the presumed failure of the existing nuclear-weapon States to disarm. But that does not stand up to closer examination. The existing nuclear-weapon States have reduced their arsenals and are continuing to do so; yet proliferation continues. Would nuclear disarmament by some reduce the nuclear ambitions of others? That seems unreliable as a basis for military planning, and is the opposite of the way the world works.

The cold war may be over, but the danger of regional confrontation remains. Not long ago two members of this Conference came dangerously close to a nuclear exchange; yet we were unable even to address that issue. In other regions, too, tension is higher than it could or should be, and nuclear weapons are a factor in the equation. So progress towards nuclear disarmament should remain a priority, and an urgent one.

The nuclear-weapon States, at least those that are party to the NPT, have accepted a treaty obligation to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament. It is the responsibility of those States to make sure that they are fulfilling that obligation. We also hope that those that have developed nuclear weapons outside the NPT will pursue similar disarmament objectives alongside us. That way we might begin to see some progress. The next step would be an agreement to arrest the creation of new fissile material for nuclear weapons. Together with the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, which I firmly believe will eventually enter into force, this would create the platform on which further progress could be built.

What we shall not get is a giant leap towards nuclear disarmament. The inevitability of gradualism will continue to operate for obvious reasons. Once the perception of threat is eliminated, the salience of nuclear weapons in security policy will lessen. Taxpayers in democratic countries will surely refuse to bear the burden of maintaining expensive weapons when the need for them has passed. But that will require better verification than can currently be guaranteed. Fortunately, verification technology is likely to advance.

How we get from here to there must in my view be through a process of small steps. If there is one thought I would like to leave with you, it is this. Blocking the small steps by insisting that the great leap must come first is a recipe for ensuring that nothing will happen. It is a policy that might almost have been invented by those who want to prevent progress. It is undoubtedly a major obstacle to getting the CD back to work.

On a more personal note, I have greatly enjoyed working with all of you here in Geneva. The subjects we deal with may be slow and frustrating, but there is a real sense of common effort. I have made many friends among colleagues here, and I have always appreciated the professionalism and cooperative spirit of those with whom relations could not be so close.

(Mr. Broucher, United Kingdom)

I am grateful to the secretariat and the interpreters for all their support. I am sure that the Geneva disarmament community deserves to survive and prosper, and I believe it will.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador David Broucher of the United Kingdom for his statement and farewell message, and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

Ambassador David Broucher has always articulated and upheld his country's position with authority, elegance and outstanding diplomatic skill. His commitment to the commencement of substantive work by the Conference and to launching negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for weapons purposes, as well as his conspicuous realism and fair play in the pursuit of honest compromise, have been recognized by all the members of the Conference. He will also be remembered for his great debating skills, which he has used to enrich his concise, to-the-point and masterly interventions. We wish Ambassador David Broucher all the best.

Before giving the floor to the remaining speakers, I think that it would be more appropriate to turn first to the adoption of the report, and then we shall continue with the list of speakers.

I should like to invite you to formalize the provisional agreement reached at the informal plenary meetings on the draft annual report, as contained in document CD/WP.535, together with the amendments contained in document CD/WP.536.

With regard to these amendments, I should like to propose a technical fix to paragraph 38 in line with the wording of similar paragraphs. Accordingly, I propose that we change the first line of paragraph 38 to read as follows: "At the 954th plenary meeting of the Conference, under the presidency of Mexico, ...". This is only a change to "plenary meeting", which is consistent with the usage of the Conference on Disarmament.

May I take it that this fix to paragraph 38 is acceptable to all delegations?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Since we were able to go through the draft annual report paragraph by paragraph at the informal plenary meetings held on Thursday, 26 August, and Thursday, 2 September, in a very detailed manner, and since we considered all the amendments to the draft report, and since the proposed factual fix is acceptable to you, I shall now proceed to the formal adoption of our annual report as a whole and as amended, without reverting to its consideration paragraph by paragraph or section by section.

In this connection, I should like to emphasize that all blanks in the draft report, such as those related to the number of meetings or the day of adoption of the report, will be filled in by the secretariat. Furthermore, all documents that have already been submitted to the secretariat before the adoption of the report will be added to the lists of documents under the appropriate subsection.

(The President)

May I take it that the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament in its entirety, as contained in document CD/WP.535, as amended by document CD/WP.536 and as orally revised in paragraph 38, is adopted?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: The secretariat will issue the report as an official document of the Conference in all official languages as soon as possible.

Before giving the floor to the remaining speakers on my list, I should like, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as on my own behalf, to bid farewell to our distinguished colleagues Ambassador Mohamed Salah Dembri of Algeria, Ambassador Christian Faessler of Switzerland and Ambassador David Broucher of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, who will soon complete their duties as representatives of their countries to the Conference on Disarmament.

Ambassador Mohamed Salah Dembri joined the Conference on Disarmament in October 1996. As a career diplomat with outstanding experience, Ambassador Dembri has contributed to our deliberations with a rare combination of a profound knowledge of both the procedural and substantive issues before the Conference and persistence in fostering consensus on the programme of work. During his presidency of the Conference in 1999, he worked out proposals aimed at overcoming the impasse on the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament. His proposals, focusing only on outstanding issues, namely nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, have considerably influenced subsequent efforts in this field. In 2002, together with four other former Presidents of the Conference representing various groups of countries, he submitted the "A-5" proposal, which still enjoys the very broad support of the membership of the Conference. His diplomatic skills in mediation, his insightful and imaginative statements and interventions and his efforts aimed at fostering consensus will be remembered in this Council Chamber.

During his tenure as Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Christian Faessler has represented his Government with dedication, distinction and outstanding diplomatic skill. During our discussions we have all benefited from his wisdom and clarity of vision. As a strong advocate of the revitalization of the Conference, Ambassador Faessler has continued to be committed to the resolution of the outstanding issues on the Conference agenda and to engaging the Conference to take up new challenges to disarmament, arms control and international security. His contribution to our collective efforts to bring about consensus, which would allow the Conference to start its substantive work, has been appreciated by all of us.

On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as on my own, I should like to wish our distinguished colleagues Ambassador Dembri, Ambassador Broucher and Ambassador Faessler, as well as their families, great success and much happiness in the future.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Christian Faessler of Switzerland.

Mr. FAESSLER (Switzerland) (translated from French): Allow me first of all, Mr. President, to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the CD and to express my delegation's full support to you in your ceaseless and outstanding efforts to get the Conference out of its current deadlock. I also thank you for the kind words you addressed to myself.

A review of the situation as regards international peace and security offers scant grounds for optimism, and the hopes raised at the end of the cold war have been largely dashed. The traditional risks, such as the presence of major nuclear stockpiles, the growing danger of horizontal and vertical proliferation, or the fear of an arms race in space, have been compounded by dangers which are of a new, far more insidious kind, such as the threats of bloodthirsty international terrorism which gives cause for concern for the whole of the planet, or the access to sophisticated weapons on the part of non-State actors. The tragic events in Beslan clearly testify to this.

Since I am coming to the end of my term of almost five years as the representative of Switzerland for disarmament, I am leaving Geneva convinced that, if we are to ensure international peace and security, the goal must be the negotiation of substantive, effective and legally binding multilateral instruments to secure disarmament and put an end to proliferation. Because it is predictable, irreversible and verifiable, this is the pre-eminent means of guaranteeing international peace and security, which are more fragile than ever before and prey to growing uncertainty.

It would of course be wrong to state that multilateralism in the field of disarmament and international security does not work. I could cite the examples of efforts to implement the Convention banning anti-personnel mines or the negotiations on the fifth protocol to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Indeed, those activities are the ones which provided me with the greatest professional satisfaction here in Geneva, at least in the field of international disarmament and security. But unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the Conference on Disarmament itself. For many years now it has not even been possible to agree on a work programme. Negotiations on a cut-off treaty, the consideration of urgent nuclear issues, discussions on ways to avoid an arms race in space or negotiations on security assurances have all been held hostage by the deadlock among a handful of member States. To get out of the rut, we all must recall our mandate and the spirit in which the Conference on Disarmament was created. What we must remember above all is that agreeing on subjects for negotiation or setting up working groups does not in any way mean agreeing on the results of the negotiations - as the recent history of the Conference has confirmed.

At the practical level, the first thing to do is to finally agree on a work programme. My country believes that the five Ambassadors' proposal is the result of a reasonable effort to be creative and to seek to move beyond national positions. This proposal follows on from previous proposals and emphasizes the points of convergence in each of them. I appeal to all States which have not yet done so to accept this proposal or, if necessary, to suggest changes to it.

We should also remember that, while the Decalogue is the basis of the Conference's work, it is not set in stone. So, secondly, we must move away from the dogmatic approach of the past and focus on what is feasible. This means starting negotiations without further delay on

(Mr. Faessler, Switzerland)

what are known as the mature subjects - that is, a cut-off treaty which is comprehensive and verifiable. But that does not mean that we should set aside any other subject on which member States might wish to negotiate - quite the contrary, since starting negotiations on one subject will undoubtedly bring others in its wake. And the agenda, in particular, will always provide the overall framework, making it possible for each delegation to bring to the fore any subject it deems important.

The informal meetings we have held this year have had the benefit of stimulating dialogue and allowing us to understand each other's positions better. That is why my delegation, thirdly, is in favour of continuing this type of meeting, but on a more structured and in-depth basis, the aim being to better prepare for, but not of course to replace, the work of the Conference proper.

To be truly credible, the Conference, fourthly, must also continue to look at what are known as the new issues, in addition to the traditional subjects. This is vital if it is to remain in tune with the times and to remain credible. The exchanges we have had during our informal discussions have been very useful, and should be continued with a view to starting work in the formal context of the Conference. In that context, allow me to remind you of a proposal made by France and Switzerland for the protection of critical infrastructure. Needless to say, the work of the Conference on new issues must again in no way replace the traditional topics, must be in keeping with the security environment, must offer added value and must not lead to duplication.

Allow me briefly to touch upon two further subjects, namely universal representation in the Conference and the role of civil society. My country has always called for the Conference on Disarmament to be a universal body, since we are convinced that the Conference would gain credibility if it opened up to the rest of the international community and thus drew a final line under the period of the cold war, which shaped its structure and image in the past.

Similarly, my country has always worked to ensure that the Conference is more alive to the concerns of civil society. We need to make still better use of the presence of many non-governmental organizations here in Geneva. The synergies they offer, just as they do for the many other United Nations and other bodies in Geneva, are of no small value in promoting international cooperation.

This is not a time for resignation or discouragement. Quite the contrary - we must draw the right lessons, overcome our mutual distrust and redouble our efforts. Only if we demonstrate that political will can our Conference, which is incontestably at a crossroads, return to its fundamental calling as the sole permanent multilateral negotiating body for disarmament and non-proliferation. Our successes but also our failures will be the yardstick by which the international community judges us one day.

I would not wish to conclude without extending to you all my warmest thanks for your cooperation and friendship. My thanks go to all my colleagues and their staff, the Secretary-General of the Conference and his excellent team, the interpreters and all the women

(Mr. Faessler, Switzerland)

and men who make our work possible day by day, including the representatives of civil society. I will always cherish the memory of my activities here in Geneva, and I wish you all much luck and success in your future work and in your personal lives.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Christian Faessler of Switzerland for his statement and farewell message and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Juan Martabit of Chile.

Mr. MARTABIT (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me on behalf of my delegation to congratulate you on your work as President and to offer you our cooperation during your term of office, and particularly during the forthcoming intersessional period.

We are concluding the 2004 session of the Conference on Disarmament. Once again this year, for the eighth consecutive year, this body has not been able to reach agreement on a programme of work. And we must say frankly that this is lamentable. Chile has firm convictions on disarmament and security. These are based on the guiding principle of the indivisibility of international security and the pre-eminence of collective security interests over the individual requirements of States. As we have said in other bodies, national security does not exist in isolation and cannot be invoked to undermine or affect the security of others.

Security in its conventional version, the defence of sovereignty and territorial integrity, is an inadequate and tenuous concept when it comes to responding appropriately and promptly to a series of threats which have begun to emerge in practically all regions of the world and which, more than ever before, directly and specifically affect individuals. Hence the emergence of an innovative approach, that of the "security of individuals", which Chile fully endorses.

In the sphere of international security, my country is pursuing a consistent policy, supporting and promoting the creation of rules and systems which facilitate the prevention and collective management of problems which affect stability both regionally and globally, and also participating in multilateral initiatives designed to maintain peace.

In a world affected by many different crises, the risk of armed conflicts has drastically diminished in Latin America and the Caribbean, and interregional conflicts have been solved by peaceful and effective means, making our region a zone of cooperation and peaceful coexistence. In this context, I should like to note the important landmarks of our full accession to the Treaty of Tlatelolco for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Mendoza Commitment signed by Argentina, Brazil and Chile in 1991 on the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, without prejudice to many bilateral, subregional and regional agreements designed to build confidence and consolidate our societies on solid foundations which will allow for cooperation, integration and development.

This is the reason for our accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, with the establishment of monitoring bases in our territory for verification of this treaty. We have also ratified the Ottawa Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines. In this respect, Chile has proceeded to the total destruction of stocks, long before the statutory deadline. We have also begun mine clearance activities in

(Mr. Martabit, Chile)

the field this year. Meanwhile, Chile is also a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and we have supported the development of an additional protocol to strengthen and ensure verification of compliance with obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention.

We give our resolute support to all instruments, whether universal or regional, on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. We attach particular importance to those which prohibit complete categories of weapons of mass destruction. We give sustained support to efforts undertaken within the United Nations to strengthen and ensure compliance with such instruments, and attach pre-eminent importance to the legitimacy conferred by multilateral negotiation.

We recognize that well-established multilateral forums are not the only effective mechanisms available to States to find legal solutions to specific threats to international security. My country therefore strongly supports The Hague Code of Conduct against the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles, of which Chile is the Chair. As is well known, this is a politically binding instrument, negotiated and implemented in the context of a wide and constantly expanding group. So far it has been signed by 115 countries. I would like to take this opportunity to call on those nations which have not yet done so to sign The Hague Code of Conduct.

I would like to say once again that regrettably, and despite the major efforts and creativity of successive Presidents, to whom we express our gratitude through you, Sir, it has not been possible to bring the Conference on Disarmament out of the stalemate which has lasted for eight long years. We have no doubt that this long period of time without substantive progress has damaged the reputation of the Conference on Disarmament and raises legitimate questions as to its future. For this reason, Chile has given and will continue to give resolute support to the constructive proposals designed to produce a programme of work which is capable of gathering the support of all members of the Conference. Our country's participation in the framework of the five Ambassadors' initiative is of course consistent with this spirit. We believe that this proposal can serve as a basis for overcoming the deadlock in the Conference and thus can begin to show the world that the disarmament community here in Geneva is making a substantive and effective contribution to peace and international security.

We are pleased to see that most of the delegations in the Conference have stated that they are ready to work on the basis of the five Ambassadors' initiative. Over these eight years it had never been possible to reach a point so close to consensus which would make it possible for the Conference to start up again. However, not all countries have yet joined in the consensus on this proposal. Some delegations have stated that links should not be established between the elements of the programme of work. This may be the only reference we have heard in this respect which would prevent them from joining the consensus on the revised A-5 initiative. Some of these delegations have stated that if in the course of these eight years, the Conference on Disarmament had addressed the subjects separately, we might possibly have made substantive progress on more than one of them. I think they are right in saying this. However, my delegation would like to know which subject on the agenda could have met with consensus separately in order to be addressed individually. If there is such a subject, we would be prepared

(Mr. Martabit, Chile)

to support it. Since apparently that is not the case, because various countries put forward different priorities, only a comprehensive agreement, such as agreement on the five Ambassadors' proposal, would make it possible to remedy this situation.

Approval of a programme of work means that the subjects on the agenda of the Conference of Disarmament, which we have all agreed upon, must be addressed. In other words, we do not want anyone to feel excluded as regards such a noble objective as that of international disarmament. However, times may change, and here it is necessary to be flexible. The idea is to approve a programme of work to which all members of the Conference are truly committed.

For my delegation, and I am sure for most of the delegations present, it is frustrating to see that the Conference remains paralysed. Because of this we are not only the losers as representatives responsible for disarmament issues in the eyes of our own societies and other multilateral forums where some voices are heard describing the Conference as a body which was important but is no longer. Not only are we making it possible for the media and other elements of civil society to provide reports on the real state of affairs in the Conference on Disarmament, and consequently to criticize the misuse of human and financial resources where there are so many other urgent needs in today's world. No, that is not all: what is most important and serious is that our paralysis contributes to existing insecurities in today's world. Let us say this without beating about the bush - on the one hand we wish to build a safer world, but we are not prepared to address a series of important issues which can help to attain that objective.

The countries which initially proposed the five Ambassadors' initiative had their priorities, like all those who have joined the proposal and have been prepared to make concessions in order to come up with a programme of work which addresses the interests of others. Knowing that there are few countries which have not come out in favour or at least have said that they could "live with it", those of us in the other delegations are enormously concerned that for this reason the Conference on Disarmament continues to be paralysed and that we are not giving positive signs to help the world on the subject of disarmament.

I began my diplomatic career strongly convinced, as were many at that time in the developing countries and various other non-nuclear Powers making up the international community, that it is important and vitally necessary to promote and achieve genuine disarmament in the world. That was based on two essential points: firstly, because we noted and continue to note in the face of such grave threats as that which the world is facing, as we pointed out even today in this Conference, that international security, international peace, cannot be achieved with nuclear arsenals. And what is even more serious, the real threats to security and international peace lie in the lack of resources suffered by a huge number of developing countries in dealing with the real problems which they have to solve, such as poverty, hunger and disease, where these are the real threats to peace and international security.

To conclude, I would like to make a few very specific points. Firstly, we call once again upon those delegations which have not yet done so to express support for the five Ambassadors' initiative. Secondly, if they have difficulties in accepting it as the basis for a programme of work, let them propose amendments which would make it possible to deal with these difficulties and thus achieve the desired consensus. Thirdly, once the A-5 proposal has been accepted, with

(Mr. Martabit, Chile)

any amendments, it should be understood that implementation may occur consecutively rather than simultaneously. My delegation is prepared to show the greatest possible flexibility in discussing the order in which each subject is effectively dealt with. Apart from that, for many small delegations such as ours, it would be very difficult to deal simultaneously with two or more series of discussions or negotiations on disarmament. Fourthly, as a counterpart to such consecutive treatment, in order to avoid difficulties in establishing the order, the principle should prevail whereby nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. And fifthly, if what I have said continues to be impossible for the few delegations which are blocking consensus that the five Ambassadors' initiative should serve as a basis for agreement on a programme of work, we would ask them to come up with a realistic and feasible proposal to be supported by all delegations which would make it possible to relaunch the Conference on Disarmament.

Frankly it is not possible for us as ambassadors and diplomatic representatives who have acquired considerable expertise, including those to whom we are bidding farewell this morning, and who are backed up by a specialized secretariat in the shape of this Conference, to continue to be unproductive and unable to make on behalf of our countries a significant contribution in respect of peace and security to the international community.

This intersessional period up to the beginning of 2005 which will be presided over by you, Mr. President, and later on by your experienced successor, offers the delegations which I have called on and all the members of the Conference on Disarmament the necessary time both for consultations with their capitals and consultations which can be conducted here in Geneva, for which my delegation will of course always be available.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Juan Martabit of Chile for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Dembri of Algeria.

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) (translated from French): My authorities have just informed me that I am involved in the diplomatic rotation this year and that in a few weeks time I will therefore take up a new diplomatic posting. Perhaps they have a sense of humour; they must have realized that after the departure of four of my A-5 colleagues it was not proper for me to play the role of the last of the Mohicans. And that is why I am bidding you farewell today.

If I were to recollect the diachronic stanzas which have marked the Conference on Disarmament since I came to Geneva, I would say that the sessions it counts out fall into two periods, two periods of intense effervescence, on the inauguration of the proceedings and on their closure, as is the case today, since they, these two sessions, reveal the obligation to achieve a synthesis in the abundance of the debate, and place within a kind of terminus ad quem the satisfaction of a duty accomplished. Hence the need for all of us here to provide not only our assessment and our position on the subjects proposed for discussion, but also to help to formulate a general synthesis which, pursued in good faith and with a full sense of responsibility, will indubitably promote our shared understanding of the challenges of disarmament and will make it possible to achieve - for the outcome cannot be otherwise - an approach which is consensual, hence strong, hence resolute.

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

The agenda of the Conference on Disarmament always presents us with two problems, closely interwoven one with the other: what substantive issues should we place on it? And what priorities should we follow in starting negotiations on them, and what organizational arrangements? That is why the positions expressed and the arguments adduced on this subject here and there, even when they refer to a selective approach or the imperative need for an integrated, global approach, cannot be set against each other, because they strive in fact to bear witness to the vigour of this charter of origins - the famous Decalogue, drawn up in 1978 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in which it cannot be denied that pride of place is given to nuclear disarmament.

Now, our current debates demonstrate the dissatisfaction we feel at certain achievements which, while praiseworthy, remain fragmented, patchy, because they do not totally and completely incorporate the aspirations of all human societies worldwide to peace and security. This was the case for the SALT, INF and START treaties, which remain bilateral agreements and failed to meet the concerns of the international community as a whole. This is the case even today for the NPT, which, while it was indefinitely extended in May 1995, reveals, in the wake of the subsequent applications, the disappointments and frustrations caused by the CTBT because it did not itself incorporate, according to the assessment we carried out in Geneva, the nuclear disarmament dimension. And if it was nevertheless supported by many countries, including mine, we must see therein, indubitably, the conviction and the hope that these countries place in the collective and multilateral task of disarmament, as reflected in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996, which reminded all of us that States have an obligation to conduct in good faith and bring to fruition negotiations on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

Thus these are obligations entered into by virtue of article VI of the NPT and commitments also undertaken at the NPT Review Conference in 2000, particularly the 13 practical steps to which we subscribed and which we need to abide by if we are to be consistent. Hence emphasizing the proliferation of nuclear weapons instead of addressing it in the context of a global disarmament approach would amount to shifting the debate and would postulate the legitimacy of the existence of this destructive weaponry as compared with the legitimacy of owning it.

One can therefore understand why the General Assembly of the United Nations has for years now adopted a succession of resolutions calling on the Conference on Disarmament to start negotiations on nuclear disarmament and, correlatively, the reasons which led the Group of 21, my group, here in Geneva to call repeatedly for the establishment of an ad hoc committee to embark on negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament, with the aim of arriving at the definitive elimination of nuclear weapons, on the basis of an agreed and jointly drawn up timetable. This remains a legitimate demand because, paradoxically, since the end of the cold war, the international situation has become tougher, the world order has become more unstable, more uncertain, more fragile.

This situation has been illustrated by the denunciation of the ABM Treaty, the unprecedented increase in stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, the development of new weapons, the weakening of the authority of the NPT and risks

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

of proliferation, the erosion of multilateralism in the management of international affairs and, even more significantly, the emergence of new nuclear-weapon States. We have also seen an upsurge in military expenditure and the arms race in outer space. What is more, the new nuclear stances, the new doctrines of deterrence, the notion of preventive warfare have added to the elements of tension, to which of course we have to add the new forms of international terrorism.

If I wanted to recall these salient events along our common and collective itinerary, it is because it seems to me that three considerations have become established on the basis of the deductions drawn from our debate in the CD. First, there is no member State in the CD which will deny that nuclear disarmament is today an objective which we share, and which has been declared a priority by the international community and international public opinion. Secondly, there is also no member State in the CD which today declares hostility to the achievement of that objective. Thirdly, we therefore note in the CD that the differences among us lie in our approaches and by no means constitute an insuperable obstacle. That is why it is appropriate to speak in defence of the global approach, which offers us the advantage of being more rational, since it avoids fragmented perceptions, more cautious since it makes it possible to develop the balance necessary for all negotiations, and fairer because it sidelines no member State - on the contrary, it rules out short-term solutions and narrow calculations and builds all the stakeholders in this multilateral forum into a single creative synergy.

For these reasons, the Conference on Disarmament should not in the slightest be afraid to endorse a global approach building into nuclear disarmament an instrument to assure the non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, a convention prohibiting their use or the threat of their use, a treaty to eliminate them and finally a convention prohibiting the production of fissile material for military purposes, not forgetting of course verification and controls over existing stockpiles. By means of this step, the CD, as the sole collective negotiating forum, strong in its conviction of the virtues of multilateral action, would incorporate, satisfy and illustrate the requirements and needs of all sides: thus the fissile material ban will be restored to its natural framework as a nuclear disarmament measure, achievements in limiting and reducing nuclear stockpiles will be incorporated in a multilateral process, the legitimate fears of the non-nuclear-weapon States will be taken up in a legally binding regime which will build confidence among nations.

In this way the concept of consensus in our Conference could be clarified. This consensus would in future be linked to the virtues of balance and would remain the most effective means of untangling the most complex situations instead of becoming an instrument of censorship, a veto harmful to collective action. It is essential for the Conference on Disarmament to respond to the many signals it has received so as to address the question of nuclear disarmament in depth, and for it to send out the return signal expected of it by the international community and more broadly by civil society, which is more and more involved in guiding our work, as we heard just now from my distinguished Swiss colleague, Christian Faessler.

So there is a need to give strong encouragement to the impetus which has been imparted to nuclear disarmament here in the CD and outside this body. It would be most harmful for all of us if we were to break this momentum by steering the work of the CD to other negotiations, to

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

other new or additional issues which, however legitimate and necessary, cannot overturn or downgrade priorities. The need for effectiveness which must be attached to them must be expressed on the functional and organic levels. First, on the functional level, an ad hoc committee with a negotiating mandate on nuclear disarmament is still the boldest and the most rational way to proceed, and one in which negotiations on a convention to ban fissile materials will find their place. Then, on the organic level, a convergence of the efforts and aspirations of one and all on the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating body, as we all proclaim, would confer greater legitimacy on our negotiations and would tend to strengthen the commitment of all nations to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

It must be acknowledged that today the problem is not that of agreeing or refusing to negotiate on a particular item in the CD. It is a matter of priorities. We can recognize that any item negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament is urgent in itself, but we must also say that within these urgent issues there are priorities, and here I am referring to what has just been said by my distinguished Chilean colleague, Juan Martabit. Recognizing these priorities would help to organize in a viable manner the work programme we must develop together. This order of priorities, let us remember, places nuclear disarmament at the centre of the concerns of the Conference on Disarmament, in terms of both conception and negotiations. Because although the international community today has legal instruments at its disposal which prohibit for ever the manufacture and use of biological and chemical weapons, the same cannot be said for nuclear weapons. That is why any non-nuclear State or State which has renounced nuclear weapons - Algeria is one of those States - enjoys political legitimacy in opting for and actively militating for a world free of nuclear weapons. That is also why any nuclear State or nuclear-weapon State has a moral duty and a political obligation to disarm and to contribute to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The possession of nuclear weapons is not recognized either legally or politically as an indefinite right. Its abolition is a legal obligation stemming from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It is also a political necessity inasmuch as nowadays nuclear weapons should not play the role of a component of power. Their elimination is the corollary of a universal need for security in the understandable interest of the non-nuclear States, but also in the interest of the nuclear States or the nuclear-weapon States, which are not immune from the untimely outbreak of a nuclear conflict amongst them. This is a fact which must be constantly borne in mind. Here again, civil society must have its say and strong global public opinion must be formed and become determined, because what is involved is not the affair of certain States but the future of mankind. It is true that reductions have occurred in the past between Americans and Russians under START or ABM, nuclear-weapon-free zones have been created, former Soviet States have renounced their nuclear status, the nuclear test-ban treaty has been finalized. Therefore the nuclear States must unambiguously commit themselves to nuclear disarmament, which can be genuine only if it is accompanied by practical measures under a specific timetable to be defined not just by the nuclear States themselves but also by the whole community of States.

Multilateral efforts in this field cannot but be useful. The hopes raised by the end of the cold war for collective security without atomic weapons have been dashed, since there was a lack of political will on the part of those who still believe, wrongly of course, in the deterrent

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

virtues of nuclear weapons and unfortunately continue to cultivate military doctrines which give pride of place to nuclear weapons - what is more, henceforth following a preventive approach. The suspension of bilateral negotiations for the reduction of stockpiles among nuclear States, the blurring of civil and military uses of outer space, are fraught with concern. That is why my country will continue to call for a committee to be established in the Conference on Disarmament as soon as possible to negotiate on that subject. In this respect we must point out that the five Ambassadors' initiative, which now enjoys very wide support in our assembly, marks significant progress towards the broadest combination of energies and carries within it the survival of the Conference on Disarmament.

All these challenges to which my delegation refers and all these pending issues require a collective response on our part, which should take the form in particular of the reactivation of the Conference on Disarmament. In other words, we must adopt a balanced work programme on the basis of appropriate mandates as soon as possible. This patient search crystallized in the birth of this novel inter-group proposal put forward by the five Ambassadors, who have sketched out for the Conference on Disarmament a perspective of consensus and demiurgical labour. Allow me therefore to welcome and pay tribute to the considerable contribution made by my colleagues who have already left: Jean Lint of Belgium, Juan Vega of Chile, Henrik Salander of Sweden and Camilo Reyes of Colombia. The authors of that proposal (CD/1693/Rev.1) have conducted a review and made proposals in order to endow the Conference on Disarmament with a work programme which will cover all the items on the agenda. It represents a global, balanced approach, open, as many speakers have pointed out here, to any amendment.

Our response to all these challenges requires each of us to display a spirit of dialogue and openness. Only on that condition can we make irreversible progress towards nuclear disarmament. Only on that condition will those amongst us who have renounced the military use of the atom and opted for the development of its civilian and peaceful use be convinced that we did not make the wrong choice, because it is not acceptable to have to wait today for changes in military policies and doctrines in order to relaunch the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is clear that all these questions are part of a broader framework, that of the definition of collective security at the beginning of the third millennium and, beyond that, the definition of the world which we want to live in and which we want to hand on to generations to come. These questions can only be handled in the context of multilateralism, which alone can offer global and comprehensive responses taking account of the concerns of all parties, and that means in the context of the CD, the Conference on Disarmament, which we must all defend against all centrifugal forces.

During these eight years I have spent in Geneva, I have appreciated this intense feeling of companionship which binds the member States to one another in the Conference on Disarmament. In the long series of efforts which have become prominent in this forum, many names of past colleagues come to mind and those who are present here, fellow travellers and fellow workers in meritorious efforts, carry within them, by virtue of the necessities of collective work, responsibility for the provisions that must be built up for the voyage together. I could not mention them all - it is so difficult to choose among so many illustrious figures. But you will allow me to make an exception for two of them: Ambassadors Antonio de Icaza of Mexico and

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

Volker Heinsberg of Germany. Ambassador Antonio de Icaza was President of the Conference on Disarmament when I arrived and, during the courtesy meeting I had with him, we had occasion to praise the creative dialogue and we remembered - he who was from a great family of diplomats - the contribution his father had made to knowledge of the great Arab civilization, a contribution which is now hallowed through the choice of a poetic quatrain - he was also a great poet, Fernando Asís de Icaza - which is now to be found on the pediment of the Alhambra in Granada. I will try to quote it: “Dale limosna, mujer, que no hay en la vida nada como la pena de ser ciego en Granada” (“Give him alms, woman, for there is no misfortune in life greater than being blind in Granada”). These words in praise of dialogue, this admiration of the readiness to listen, I saw them in Antonio de Icaza, in Ambassador de Icaza, worthy son of his father.

Ambassador Volker Heinsberg was President of the Conference on Disarmament when the five Ambassadors' proposal saw the light of day, and it was he who, during an informal lunch, obviously encouraged this quest for a synthesis and also this quest for dialogue among different groups. This is not perhaps a well-known fact, but I would like to pay tribute to him today, and quote in German the poet Goethe, who said: “Ich habe mein Hause auf Nichts gestellt, deshalb gehört mir die ganze Welt” (“My trust is placed in nothing now; at my command the world must bow”).

Of course I remember two men, but naturally I would not like to seem macho and I wish also to pay tribute to a very great female ambassador, who was there when I arrived, Ms. Joëlle Bourgois, the Ambassador of France, and who was already assisted by our outstanding colleague François Rivasseau. Ms. Bourgois was here to uphold her country's position during that disastrous affair - for all of us - of the tests in Mururoa, and obviously she did so with conviction and sincerity but also commitments for the future which I carry in my memory and which, I hope, will one day enable France to join those who currently support the A-5 proposal.

My thoughts are troubled at the idea that I will soon be leaving this Conference, this Mecca of debate. I owe much to the attentive ear lent by my colleagues. I have appreciated the quality of the profound, fertile exchanges, rich in communication and meanings, and I thank everyone for their involvement. My most cordial words of thanks go to the entire secretariat team, which is a devoted team steered by our colleague Román-Morey. I would also like to thank all his colleagues for their assistance and, among others - I hope he will forgive me for mentioning him by name - Mr. Zaleski. My thanks go to the whole technical team of translators and interpreters who have rendered the tower of Babel of our soliloquies intelligible. And finally, to you, Mr. President, who brilliantly finalized our 2004 report through your sense of diplomatic negotiation and dexterity, I convey all my friendship, which also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, who has always provided us with advice and support.

Good luck to everybody, and goodbye. Thank you!

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Dembri of Algeria for his statement and farewell message and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ms. Sabine Taufmann of Germany.

Ms. TAUFMANN (Germany): Of course, it is always very difficult and a big challenge to speak after Ambassador Dembri, but I shall do my best.

I would like to express first of all my deep sadness about the tragic events in Beslan in North Ossetia. My sympathy goes to the hundreds of victims, to the innocent children and their despairing families.

Mr. President, allow me to express my appreciation for your intensive efforts during your presidency. At the same time, I would like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessors, Ambassador Amina Mohamed of Kenya, Ambassador Rajmah Hussain of Malaysia, Ambassador Pablo Macedo of Mexico, Ambassador Khasbazaryn Bekhbat of Mongolia and Ambassador Omar Hilale of Morocco, for their untiring efforts during the 2004 session of the Conference to move towards a programme of work.

The Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community. According to the programme of action of SSOD-I, it is our task to “undertake the elaboration of a comprehensive programme of disarmament encompassing all measures thought to be advisable in order to ensure ... general and complete disarmament under effective international control”.

Do we want to call into question the continuing relevance of defining the comprehensive programme of disarmament as a measure to promote and attain general and complete disarmament? Do we intend to make ourselves “obsolete”?

Germany welcomes informal plenary sessions as an instrument for reaching consensus on a programme of work taking into account the different priorities and concerns. But this way of proceeding is not an end in itself. We should not have informal plenaries for the sake of having them. They cannot be a substitute for arriving at a compromise on the work programme and the establishment of proper working bodies.

Against this background, Germany would like to reiterate its support for the A-5 proposal as a programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament, as contained in document CD/1693/Rev.1 dated 5 September 2003. The A-5 proposal in its revised version - or in a simplified “streamlined version” as proposed by Canada - accommodates the various positions, concerns and priorities of the members of the CD as stated on various occasions and again during formal and informal plenary meetings on the agenda of the CD. Germany appreciates that some delegations are ready to join a consensus on a CD programme of work based on the A-5 proposal or on its amended version although the proposals on the table do not entirely meet their priorities. This attitude seems to be the only feasible way out of the stalemate of the CD and a decisive step on the path to substantive work. Blocking the necessary consensus on a programme of work through conditional “linkages” or even “hostage-taking” is inconsistent with an open-minded approach geared towards achieving a viable compromise respecting also the concerns and positions of others. I fail to understand why it has not been possible to start work on an FMCT. We already have an agreed mandate in place. So why is there further delay in establishing an ad hoc committee? Does this testify to bad faith on the part of those opposing the establishment of such a working body?

(Ms. Taufmann, Germany)

We thank the United States of America for having finished its review of FMCT. The results presented to us will be thoroughly examined by my capital. But allow me already at this stage to make the following observations. Germany considers a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT) the logical next step in the process of multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We do not have a coherent approach for dealing with fissile material. This is all the more deplorable considering the significant proliferation risks associated with these materials. Continued tangible progress towards irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament is indispensable. Germany feels that the negotiations should be based on the existing Shannon mandate as adopted by the CD in March 1995 and as contained in the revised A-5 proposal, which calls for a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable FMCT. An FMCT should be the next step on the international non-proliferation and disarmament agenda after the successful conclusion of negotiations on the CTBT, which is still waiting for its entry into force at the earliest possible date as demanded by the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Controversial matters should not deter us from stepping into negotiations. An FMCT would constitute a new substantial disarmament measure to enhance confidence, a proof of effective multilateralism and an essential building block of our international security system, since it could decisively improve control of nuclear material and thus - against the background of the fight against terrorism - contribute to enhancing security worldwide. Taking up negotiations on an FMCT in time could deliver the right message to the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

Another useful contribution of the CD in meeting the new challenges of a changed security environment would be to revisit the question of radiological weapons, as contained in the A-5 proposal as well. For a long time radiological weapons were considered a secondary issue, as no such weapons are produced by States and as a number of problems have arisen with regard to definitions, scope and verifiability of a treaty banning the development, production, stockpiling and use of radiological weapons. But in this context, let me refer to the United Nations Secretary-General's speech to the CD, read out at the first plenary meeting last year, in which the informal debate on radiological weapons in this Conference was praised as a discussion that reflects heightened security concerns following the events of 11 September. The tragic events of 11 September 2001 have demonstrated that terrorists are ready to use any means to commit their heinous attacks. The danger of the use of radiological weapons for terrorist purposes is not negligible. This makes prevention more important than ever before. We cannot wait until such weapons are put together by terrorists or even have been used.

An effective international strategy to keep WMD out of the hands of terrorist must be built on a structure of multilateral arms control and non-proliferation measures, because this is no longer a question of solely national responsibility but of pivotal international interest. A universal approach is the only way to deal with this issue, and the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has a key role to play in this undertaking.

Existing treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones have banned nuclear weapons from different regions of the world. This is a path which deserves to be pursued further, especially in regions of tension, and to be complemented by effective international arrangements.

(Ms. Taufmann, Germany)

Non-nuclear-weapon States have to be assured against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Unilateral security assurances and so-called “positive security assurances” are important first steps. In the European Union Strategy against Proliferation of WMD, adopted by the European Council in December 2003, Germany and its partners recognized that “positive and negative security assurances ... can serve both as an incentive to forgo the acquisition of WMD and as a deterrent”. Germany therefore supports the establishment of an ad hoc committee in the CD, as contained in the revised A-5 proposal.

Furthermore, Germany considers of utmost importance the establishment of an ad hoc committee to deal with the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as contained in the revised A-5 proposal. Arms control and disarmament are not ends in themselves; they are tools to enhance security. We need framework regulations for the reliable civil as well as legitimate military use of outer space in order to avoid outer space becoming an insecure area with an incalculable impact on world security. To this end Germany welcomes all efforts to identify and examine specific topics or proposals, which could include confidence-building or transparency measures, general principles, treaty commitments and the elaboration of a regime capable of preventing an arms race in outer space, including the possibility of negotiating a relevant international legal instrument. The proposals submitted by Russia and China might serve as a good point of departure for further discussions on this issue.

All these issues constitute at the same time necessary confidence- and security-building measures and thus an important form of arms control, both at the global and regional level. They are neither new nor old, but essential on the international agenda and in particular in the light of the changed international environment we face today. The fact that some issues have been for so long on the international agenda and are still there proves how demanding but at the same time how important and relevant their handling is.

Mr. President, I would like to encourage you and the incoming President, Ambassador Chris Sanders of the Netherlands, to continue your intensive consultations in order to bring us nearer to common ground and back to substantial work in our 2005 session. And I strongly appeal to all of us to undertake renewed efforts to bring the Conference on Disarmament back to substantive work in order to fulfil the mandate entrusted to us.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ms. Sabine Taufmann for her statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call upon Ambassador Jackie Sanders of the United States of America.

Ms. SANDERS (United States of America): First please let me add the condolences and support of the United States to the people of the Russian Federation.

The United States during this session tabled major proposals on negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty as well as a ban on the sale or export of persistent landmines, with the objective of getting down to genuine substantive work at the Conference on Disarmament. We took the extra step of bringing in a team of experts from Washington to conduct briefings concerning problems inherent in FMCT verification. We have been gratified by the enthusiastic response to these briefings, which suggest that delegations are eager to get down to serious

(Ms. Sanders, United States)

business negotiating an FMCT. The United States believes that FMCT and persistent landmines represent the best hope that the Conference has for concrete action. Successful completion of such treaties would save many lives worldwide.

Some delegations have suggested that these proposals are ripe for negotiation. You will not be surprised that we agree and would welcome delegations taking advantage of this opportunity. We plan to continue to consult informally with delegations during the intersessional period, both on FMCT and on landmines. Based on these efforts we hope that the Conference can begin next year in a proper spirit, namely with the resolve to set aside differences over various work proposals and with the determination to undertake at last substantive work here in the Conference on Disarmament. It is long overdue.

We look forward to working with all of you in the First Committee next month.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Jackie Sanders of the United States of America for her statement. I now call upon Ambassador Carlo Trezza of Italy.

Mr. TREZZA (Italy): Since I have the floor, I would like first of all to express, like other speakers, our shock at what Ambassador Skotnikov has defined as the “monstrous crime of Beslan” and express through him to his authorities and to his people our profound condolences and sympathy.

I also take this opportunity to express my respect and great appreciation for the tireless efforts that you have made to ensure progress at the CD, Mr. President, as well as congratulations on the successful conclusion of the report. You can count on us, and we wish to support you during the intersessional period and look forward to consultations with you as well as with your successor, Ambassador Chris Sanders.

I hesitate to take the floor after the eloquent statements made by the previous speakers, and I refer in particular to the farewell statements by Ambassadors Dembri, Broucher and Faessler. Let me say that I want to praise the high intellectual and political value of their statements.

What I have to make is fundamentally an announcement. One month ago, I think, colleagues representing either members or observer countries to the CD received a letter from me inviting them to a seminar which will take place here in this very room on 28 September. I then announced in my letter that I would have circulated a programme of that event, and I believe that the programme is being circulated right now.

The seminar addresses the issue of cooperative threat reduction, of which the Global Partnership of the G-8 is the most important, but not the only, expression. I illustrated this issue during my statement to the CD on 20 January here. I think that the issue that I want to discuss - and we want to discuss - during this seminar is relevant to the deliberations of the Conference on Disarmament, since these are programmes aimed at eliminating, in particular, weapons of mass

(Mr. Trezza, Italy)

destruction. I also presented this problem to the NPT Preparatory Conference last May in New York, since the programmes that I am mentioning here have a special relevance to the NPT process, and they respond to some of the specific articles of the Treaty.

Therefore, this is the opportunity to invite everyone here - missions, all collaborators, as well as representatives of the public, to participate in this seminar, and I want to take this opportunity to thank the secretariat of the CD for the precious help that we have received in organizing this event.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Carlo Trezza of Italy for his kind invitation to the seminar and the warm words addressed to the Chair. I now call upon Ambassador François Rivasseau of France.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, the French delegation of course associates itself with the thanks, the congratulations and the best wishes which you have addressed to the three ambassadors who are regrettably leaving us.

I would like to return very briefly to a point raised by my colleague and friend Christian Faessler. I would like to inform members of the Conference, in agreement with him, that the Geneva Centre for Security Policy has confirmed that a further seminar on internal security and protection of critical infrastructure will be held in October following last year's seminar on the same topic. I understand that each CD delegation and the representatives of civil society will shortly be receiving an invitation in that respect. I hope that this seminar will enable us to deepen a shared understanding of the stakes involved in this topic and the responses that the international community can provide. For those of us who will be in New York during the work of the First Committee and therefore will be unable to attend, the French and Swiss delegations and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy plan to organize a session to review and discuss the results of the seminar which I have just mentioned following the conclusion of the First Committee's work.

Mr. President, allow me while thanking you to congratulate you also on the wisdom with which you have guided the work of our Conference so far.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador François Rivasseau of France for his kind invitation and for the warm words addressed to the Chair.

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

Since this is the final day of the 2004 session, I wish to make a concluding statement.

Today the Conference on Disarmament concludes its 2004 session.

Despite all our efforts, a programme of work that will launch negotiations on FMCT and substantive work on other issues still remains elusive.

(The President)

Nevertheless, there have been significant developments at this year's session. There was a decision by the Conference under the presidency of Ambassador Amina Mohamed of Kenya on the enhancement of the engagement of civil society in the work of the CD; and there were informal plenary meetings under the presidencies of Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco and Myanmar on the issues on the agenda and new and additional issues related to the agenda of the CD. These structured informal plenary meetings were new developments at this year's session.

A total of 12 structured informal plenary meetings were held at this year's session. From 13 May to 24 June 2004, structured informal plenary meetings were held on substantive items on the agenda of the CD. On 5 August, one structured informal plenary was held on "New and additional issues related to the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament". On 10 and 12 August, two structured informal plenary meetings were held on "Methodology of the programme of work". On 24 August, one structured informal plenary meeting was held on "How to move forward on substantive issues/programme of work". On 31 August, one structured informal plenary meeting was held on "Assessment and stocktaking of informal plenary meetings".

Our priority is to reach agreement on the programme of work or the establishment of ad hoc committees. During the intersessional period, I will continue my consultations on a possible programme of work and on other issues. In so doing, I shall work closely with the previous Presidents and the incoming President, and shall consult delegations.

I believe that there is a general feeling among the member States of the CD that no efforts should be spared to overcome the current impasse in the CD and to reach an agreement on the programme of work.

To this end, I once again appeal to all the member States and to all the delegations to display maximum flexibility. We all know too well that important political decisions are made in the capitals. Nevertheless, the need to have an appropriate outlook and balanced view cannot be overemphasized.

Allow me to illustrate this with a folk tale.

Once upon a time, two warriors were travelling on different roads of a large territory. Two knights, coming from different directions, came to a crossroads. There was a big mirror hung on a tall post at the crossing of the two roads. The mirror reflected the sunlight, as it was dawn and the sun was rising on the horizon.

The knight coming from the road on the right said that he saw a gold colour in the mirror. The knight coming from the left said that he saw a silver colour in the mirror.

The two knights quarrelled on the issue of whether the mirror reflected gold or silver. They fought each other. Both of them were badly injured. They were completely exhausted. It was not long before the first knight, coming from the road on the right hand side, got up from the ground and took a careful look at the mirror from the left hand side of the crossing. He realized

(The President)

that the second knight was correct in saying that the mirror, viewed from the left, reflected a silver colour. The second knight also took a long look at the mirror from the right. He realized his mistake. The mirror, viewed from the right, reflected a gold colour. Consequently, the two knights had a reconciliation. They became good friends.

We should do likewise. We should take into account the positions of the other parties and take a balanced view. In this way, we may be able to facilitate the process of finding common ground, leading to reaching consensus on the programme of work.

There is also one more factor that we should not overlook. It also very much depends on the Permanent Representatives and the delegations. Positive thinking, diplomatic skills, rich experience, high professionalism and expertise on the part of the representatives concerned also count a lot.

That is why a representative of a country may be more or less active, depending on this factor, although the policy of a particular government may remain basically the same. The human factor is so important. I sincerely believe that the Conference on Disarmament - the best club in town - has the best brains, representing the finest traditions of multilateral diplomacy. I count on your valuable contributions in terms of new ideas and innovative solutions.

Once again, I should like to express my profound thanks to all delegations for their support and cooperation as well as for their important contributions. I also wish to convey my deep appreciation to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, for his valuable support, not only by providing conference facilities and services but also by assisting in my consultations on substantive matters. My most sincere thanks also go to Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jerzy Zaleski and other members of the secretariat. Without their support and assistance, it would have been impossible to complete these difficult tasks, including report-writing. I also thank the interpreters who have worked long hours to provide interpretation service at the formal and informal meetings held during this period.

Before adjourning this plenary meeting, I should like to inform the Conference that as provided for in rule 9 of the rules of procedure, the representatives of the following member States will preside over the Conference in 2005: Netherlands, from 1 January to 20 February; New Zealand, from 21 February to 20 March; Nigeria, from 21 March to 12 June; Norway, from 13 June to 10 July; Pakistan, from 11 July to 28 August; and Peru, from 29 August to 31 December 2005.

This concludes our business for today, as well as for the 2004 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 25 January 2005, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.