
Conference on Disarmament

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President: Mr. Chitsaka Chipaziwa..... (Zimbabwe)

* Reissued for technical reasons.

The President: I declare open the 1131st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have a list of four speakers for today's plenary meeting. I give the floor to Mr. Klaus-Peter Gottwald, Commissioner of the German Federal Government for Arms Control and Disarmament.

Mr. Gottwald (Germany): It is my great pleasure to attend the Conference on Disarmament at this particular moment in time, when hope for a new window of opportunity for international disarmament efforts is rising throughout the world. As this is the first time for me to address the Conference in my present capacity, let me also express my deep appreciation and respect for all the important disarmament work that has been carried out here in this very impressive room. In fact, I have just mentioned to some colleagues here that I was involved in the Conference on Disarmament in the early 1990s, when we negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention successfully, and this is, so to speak, the centre to which I hold the Conference. I hope very much that it can follow that up very soon again. Major disarmament instruments such as the Biological and in particular the Chemical Weapons Conventions and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty came to life in the Conference on Disarmament. This should encourage us to strengthen our efforts even further in order to prove the potential of the Conference. As I said, the Conference should be in the position to take up again its main responsibility as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.

Since this is the first time in this session that the German delegation has taken the floor, allow me also to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the post of the President of the Conference on Disarmament during its 2009 session. I would like to assure you and the other P-6 presidencies chairing the Conference on Disarmament during 2009 of my delegation's full support for your efforts to guide the work of this Conference to overcome its long-standing impasse. I would furthermore like to commend you, your fellow P-6 members, and the coordinators for the useful debates that the Conference has had this year under your stewardship.

Although the threat of nuclear weapons may be less present in minds and the media today than it was during the cold war, making progress in nuclear disarmament continues to be one of the major challenges for the international community. The overwhelming response to the articles by Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn, William Perry and George Shultz has given a clear signal: we cannot afford to be passive. We need renewed efforts towards complete nuclear disarmament, "Global Zero", as a rational, sustainable long-term solution to ensure our security. For that, I am glad that four German elder statesmen — Helmut Schmidt, Richard von Weizsäcker, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Egon Bahr — have contributed their own ideas in support of the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.

That all these "wise men", who cannot be suspected of being "peaceniks" but are politicians with a realistic political approach, today are convinced that the goal of "Global Zero" underlines the fact that the military use of nuclear weapons is more and more questionable in this century's conflicts. On the other hand, the danger of terrorists getting their hands on nuclear weapons and materials is growing and will remain one of the major threats if no steps are taken to reduce considerably the numbers of such weapons.

We cannot expect to reach the goal of "Global Zero" in the short-term, but we should take up the vision and ideas of these "wise men" as guidance and encouragement for further efforts in nuclear disarmament.

The current international environment seems to be much better suited for such efforts than in previous years. We welcome the support expressed by the new United States administration for the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The commitment of the new administration to an early ratification of the CTBT and to further negotiated and

verifiable steps towards reductions in strategic weapons as well as non-strategic nuclear weapons is equally highly welcome. Such steps help prepare the ground for a policy approach directed at nuclear disarmament worldwide, reflecting the changed security conditions of the twenty-first century. This new impetus for multilateral arms control and disarmament is urgently needed.

This year offers a number of opportunities to prove the seriousness of our commitment.

The NPT Review Conference 2010 is a key target date in our common endeavours. The treaty regime and the international community as a whole cannot afford another failure as in 2005. But we have only 14 months left to work towards a successful conference. To achieve this goal, we need to remind ourselves of, and reaffirm, the fundamental bargain underlying the NPT, making this bargain the cornerstone of nuclear arms control and disarmament: the interdependent and mutually reinforcing relationship between the three pillars of the NPT, i.e. the obligations for non-proliferation and for nuclear disarmament, as well as the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In order to overcome the current challenges of the NPT regime, we need not only to continue and further enhance our joint efforts for non-proliferation, but also to see tangible steps by the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their nuclear disarmament obligations under article VI of the Treaty. The preparedness of the United States and the Russian Federation Governments to conclude a legally-binding succession agreement to START I — as demonstrated here last week in Geneva by the two foreign ministers — gives the right signal. This May, during the third PrepCom, we will have the opportunity to prepare as best as we can next year's NPT Review Conference. With the necessary political will, mutual trust, as well as a common and sustained commitment to all objectives of the NPT, I am confident that a successful RevCon can be and will be achieved.

In addition, we need further to develop existing initiatives for multilateral nuclear fuel assurances. In 2007, Germany proposed a multilateral enrichment facility under the control of IAEA. We call it the "Multilateral Enrichment Sanctuary Project" or "MESP". This afternoon, at the UNIDIR seminar on "Multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle", there will be ample opportunity to further present and discuss this initiative, and I thank UNIDIR for arranging that seminar on this important topic. Here, I would like to state only that we believe that the Sanctuary Project proposal can accommodate both the legitimate concerns of NPT members interested in the peaceful use of nuclear energy regarding the nuclear fuel cycle and supply, as well as proliferation concerns.

Also here, at this very place, we should not let another year pass without proving the Conference's right to exist. Germany is convinced that, over the course of the last two years, the Conference on Disarmament — thanks to the skill and the efforts of the 2007 and 2008 Conference presidencies — has made progress in bringing us closer to agreeing to a programme of work as the prerequisite for starting negotiations within the Conference. Germany has been working consistently on the adoption of a programme of work and has continuously demonstrated its flexibility. We supported the so-called "A5 Proposal" of 5 September 2003 and the L.1 document in 2007 and continue to fully support the March 2008 proposal for a programme of work as contained in document CD/1840.

We are ready to continue showing this proven flexibility in order to overcome the deadlock in the Conference, and hope for equal flexibility from all members of the Conference with regard to the programme of work. We therefore urge all members to join support for — or at least not stand in the way of — the adoption of a programme of work on the basis of the CD/1840 proposal. This is a carefully crafted and well-balanced compromise that we believe takes into account the views of all parties and should be acceptable to all of them.

We believe the programme of work is not an end in itself but just a tool that should enable the Conference to fulfil its functions, and we all would serve the international community much better by actually investing our energy in substantive work on the relevant issues, including negotiations, where appropriate, rather than just having protracted debates on mostly formal and procedural issues.

Obviously, Germany is ready to engage in substantial discussions on the items included in CD/1840: nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war; the prevention of an arms race in outer space; appropriate international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; and other issues related to the Conference on Disarmament agenda. Germany is certainly willing to take up these substantial discussions within a clear perspective of starting negotiations on these issues, once the time is ripe.

We need a renewed effort to finally engage in substantial steps forward to start FMCT negotiations. This remains the next logical step, besides the entry into force of the CTBT, for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Together with our partners in the European Union, Germany attaches a clear priority to the negotiation, without any preconditions, in the Conference on Disarmament, of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as a means to strengthen both disarmament and non-proliferation. After fruitful and very encouraging debates on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament during the past years, it is clear that the issue has long been ripe for negotiation and we should lose no more precious time.

We are aware that key differences remain regarding the content of such a future treaty, in particular as far as scope and verification are concerned. It has been our long-held position that a verifiable FMCT is in the interest of the international community and its efforts for disarmament and non-proliferation. In fact, nothing should be precluded from the negotiations, if negotiations on an FMCT should start. We continue to stand by this commitment and are ready to become fully engaged in the negotiation of a credible and verifiable FMCT here in the Conference. In this respect, we very much welcome the affirmation made by the new Secretary of State of the United States, Hillary Clinton, in her confirmation hearing already on 13 January 2009, that the new United States administration “will dedicate efforts to revive negotiations on a verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty”.

Pending the start of such negotiations, Germany has proposed in a working paper submitted for the NPT PrepCom in 2008, inter alia, the establishment, within the Conference on Disarmament, of a group of scientific experts to examine the technical aspects of an FMCT. Such an ad hoc group of experts could assist the discussions in the Conference and deal with technical aspects related to, among others, definitions, the scope and verification of an FMCT. Of course, the group could not prejudge any outcome in the Conference negotiations.

In addition to cutting off the production of fissile material for weapons purposes, we need to do more to increase the security, transparency and control over existing fissile material stocks worldwide. Germany supports initiatives to provide for transparency and accounting of fissile material stocks in order to build confidence and ease tensions.

Germany is ready, together with all interested parties, to become even more active in all these issues. We are looking forward to this year with great hope and expectations to achieve real progress in the field of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

The President: I thank Mr. Gottwald for his statement, which illustrated to us his country’s disposition in the field of disarmament. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt, Ambassador Badr.

Mr. Badr (Egypt): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to seize this opportunity to commend you on your able handling of the work of the Conference.

As the first part of the 2009 session of the Conference draws to a close, allow me to take the floor briefly to highlight a matter to which Egypt attaches the utmost importance. While this matter has since 1995 primarily been addressed within the framework of the NPT, Egypt believes that the Conference on Disarmament, with its central role in international efforts related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, is nonetheless an appropriate forum for us to underscore our concerns and the importance we attach to the creation in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons.

When the second part of this session commences its work in mid-May, the third and final session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference will by then have concluded its work. Its successes and shortcomings will have already been demonstrated, and we will have passed the final stop on the road to the 2010 Review Conference. Thus, my delegation feels that it is imperative to highlight clearly now our full expectation that the upcoming Preparatory Committee will witness a healthy and dynamic handling of practical ways and means to operationalize the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. It remains our assessment that the credibility and viability of the NPT continues to be undermined as long as any of the elements of the 1995 package remain unimplemented.

The call to establish in the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons rests upon the firmest of grounds from both within and without the NPT. Articles VI and VII of the NPT, the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, Decision 2 of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, the 2000 NPT Review Conference outcome document, Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991), General Assembly resolution 63/38 of 2008, as well as the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 1996 and other texts, all contribute to creating a solid, unambiguous and mutually-reinforcing framework that makes the establishment of such a zone a global imperative, and collectively highlight that lack of progress in this matter perpetuates a situation that constitutes a direct threat to regional and international peace and security, increasing the potential for a regional nuclear arms race.

The lack of political will exhibited by some States to fulfil their obligations must be addressed and remedied through immediate and effective action to implement concrete and practical measures establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In that regard, Egypt looks forward to receiving official feedback on the non-exhaustive practical suggestions contained in the working paper submitted by Egypt at the second session, held in 2008, of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Conference on establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Egypt believes that the time to act is upon us, and we stand ready to engage with other States so as to achieve what is essentially our collective objective. In this regard, we welcome the recent important statement made by H.E. Minister Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, in his reference to the importance of establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt for his statement. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Turkey, Mr. Ahmed Üzümcü.

Mr. Üzümcü (Turkey): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I have taken the floor, allow me warmly to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are grateful to you and the other members of the P-6 for your tireless efforts.

My delegation also thanks the agenda item coordinators for their diligent work and for the reports that they presented orally last Tuesday. The main thrust of ideas put forward on the seven agenda items concurs to a large extent with the findings of our deliberations in 2007 and 2008.

We presented our general position on the seven agenda items in our statement at the plenary meeting on 20 January 2009. We also shared our thoughts on FMCT and PAROS during the informal meetings. Today, I wish to elaborate our position particularly on the four core issues.

The essence of our thinking on agenda items 1 and 2 has been a balanced approach towards the three pillars of the NPT. We have been advocating that nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use need to rest on an equal footing. We are pleased to observe that this approach has gained increased support. Commitment to the fulfilment of the respective legal and political obligations contained in the NPT by all States parties, nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States alike, should be reaffirmed and put into practice.

It is in this context that we have been encouraging a gradual and realistic approach towards the fulfilment of article VI goals. We should build on existing treaty-based nuclear arms control and disarmament accords, as well as the conclusions of the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences.

We welcome the paradigm shift in nuclear thinking. The key role attributed to nuclear weapons in security and defence policies has been reduced. The accomplishments in nuclear disarmament have been significant. Additional reductions in nuclear forces and the further lowering of their operational status will give a new impetus to current efforts. Preservation of the momentum is particularly relevant for the success of the upcoming NPT Preparatory Committee Meeting and the Review Conference.

The Conference on Disarmament may play an historic role at this juncture. Progress in our work here could indeed constitute a complementary building block. Following an agreement on a programme of work, the Conference could start negotiations on an FMCT.

Turkey is of the opinion that a comprehensive and non-discriminatory approach to FMCT negotiations should be adopted. We encourage member States to show flexibility with regard to the modalities of a mandate on an FMCT, so that we can reach consensus within a reasonable time frame. Such a prospect would give a good signal to the NPT Preparatory Committee in May. We stand ready to support the efforts of the P-6 in this regard.

As an Annex 2 State of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, Turkey has been actively participating in article XIV conferences since 1999. We shall continue to encourage the concerned States to ratify the Treaty. Turkey has assumed a key responsibility within the verification system. One of the 50 primary seismic stations of the International Monitoring System is based in Turkey. This station has already been certified.

We believe that the commencement of negotiations on FMCT, the entry into force of the CTBT and, hopefully, a follow-up to START I could play a catalyst role for a successful outcome at the NPT Review Conference. We must seize this opportunity, which will strengthen the NPT process and further enhance effective multilateralism in the field of disarmament.

The importance that my country attaches to the peaceful use of outer space has already been emphasized. Turkey, as a country operating satellites for the last 15 years, relies on them in day-to-day life and will continue to make increased use of outer space.

Thus, we support in principle the proposals for strengthening the existing international legal framework aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space. Different options are being addressed. The proposal presented by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China deserves careful consideration by the Conference on Disarmament. We are looking forward to receiving the compilation of observations on the draft PPWT.

Discussions on transparency and confidence-building measures at the informals have been particularly useful. We are intrigued by the idea that such measures may serve as a precursor to a legally-binding instrument.

We regard the issue of negative security assurances as firmly anchored in the NPT regime. The 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference noted the unanimously adopted United Nations Security Council resolution 984 (1995), as well as the declarations of the nuclear-weapon States concerning both negative and positive security assurances. The Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference also made specific references to the issue. The Conference agreed that legally-binding security assurances by the five nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT would strengthen the non-proliferation regime. It was also acknowledged that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones plays an important role in the extension of negative security assurances.

Turkey's support for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and, more specifically, for the 1995 resolution on a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction, will continue.

Our deliberations on agenda items 5, 6, and 7 seem to re-validate the general framework that emerged in 2007 and 2008. Members agreed on the value of continuing discussions on these items.

I should like to reiterate our view that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery become all the more worrying in the context of terrorism. The challenge includes new types of such weapons and radiological devices. While we condemn terrorism in all its forms, which is a crime against humanity and which cannot be justified under any pretext, we need to remain vigilant about the risk of the acquisition by terrorists of weapons of mass destruction and their various means of delivery. The international community should continue to work together, in line with the letter and spirit of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

The Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material is also a valuable instrument. As envisaged by the Convention, the adoption of appropriate and effective measures to ensure the prevention, detection and punishment of unlawful taking and use of nuclear material is of key importance.

The entry into force, in July 2007, of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism was another significant step in our common endeavours in this field.

The excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons pose a significant threat to peace and security. There is also a close and disturbing relationship between the illicit trade in arms and terrorism. Turkey will continue to contribute actively to all efforts within the United Nations and other forums towards the establishment of effective norms and rules aimed at eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. A comprehensive approach to the manufacturing, seizure and destruction of small arms and light weapons would be appropriate. Transparency and information-sharing would certainly help to promote effective implementation of agreed multilateral standards for these arms and weapons. We also support the further strengthening of the United Nations Programme of Action. We welcome the adoption of a substantive report at the Third Biennial Meeting of the States Parties in July 2008.

Turkey maintains a favourable position on the conclusion of an arms trade treaty, which should halt the unregulated and uncontrolled trade of conventional arms worldwide and establish common standards for their global trade.

I should also like to touch briefly on our commitment to ending the humanitarian suffering caused by certain conventional weapons which have indiscriminate effects.

Turkey joined both the Mine-Ban Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Turkey has been participating actively in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts, which is working on a protocol to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons on cluster munitions. We hope that States parties to the Convention will intensify their efforts in order to produce a realistic but substantive document in the coming months. Such a legally-binding instrument would have the potential to cover 85 per cent of the existing stockpiles which remain outside the scope of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Finally, Turkey has been a co-sponsor of the United Nations General Assembly resolutions on transparency in armaments. Transparency and information-sharing are essential for enhancing the implementation of the agreed multilateral framework for arms control. This issue remains relevant for further consideration at the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Turkey for his important statement. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria.

Mr. Jazaïry (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. I should like first to express our deep gratitude to you for the wise manner in which you are guiding our deliberations.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. As a State party to the Treaty, Algeria is fully committed to the obligations and undertakings that arise from it.

The credibility of the Treaty, as is the case with any international instrument in the field of disarmament, is related to the sense of security that it offers to States parties. Perhaps one of the major challenges confronting the Treaty is the issue of universality, of ensuring that all States are included.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones make a major contribution to nuclear disarmament and to the prevention of nuclear proliferation, which strengthens the non-proliferation and disarmament regime for these deadly weapons.

In this context, we can only express our deep concern at the fact that no progress has been achieved towards making the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone, some 14 years since the adoption of a resolution on that topic at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. Perhaps it would be useful to recall that this resolution, which was reaffirmed during the 2000 Review Conference, was one of the key elements that led the Arab States to accept the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

Every State in the region has acceded to this instrument as an expression of good faith and as a token of trust on their part, except for one. One State continues to refuse to accede to the Treaty as a non-nuclear State and place its nuclear installations under the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), thereby challenging, or rather disregarding, Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991), the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the 1995 Review Conference resolution. It would not continue to do so were it not for the fact that some parties apply selective double standards and remain silent with regard to this situation. We would note that efforts are being made to address the real or even theoretical risk of proliferation in various places; yet even though the Prime Minister of Israel publicly acknowledged in 2006 that his country possesses nuclear capabilities, Israel nevertheless continues to remain immune from such measures. The efforts of those who call for the prevention of nuclear proliferation would be more credible and effective if they dealt with nuclear proliferation in a neutral and objective manner, without discrimination or favouritism.

What is strange is the reasons that some are adducing in an effort to link ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons with the peace process. Such analyses undermine the non-

proliferation regime, particularly as the only party in the region that possesses nuclear weapons is the one that is occupying Arab territories, refusing the outstretched Arab hand of peace and obstructing the peace process.

Ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons is of the utmost importance for regional security, as well as for world stability and peace. Achieving this objective, which is the responsibility of the entire international community, would in itself restore confidence and revive the faltering peace process.

We wish to stress once again the importance of implementing the 1995 resolution and freeing the region of these deadly weapons, as well as the need for the international community, and the five nuclear-weapon States in particular, to assume their responsibilities and take adequate practical measures to implement this resolution, which was proposed by the Treaty's depositary States, so as to oblige Israel to accede to the Treaty and place its nuclear installations under the IAEA safeguards regime.

It is our hope that the 2010 Treaty Review Conference, being the natural forum in which to address this issue, will meet the hopes and aspirations of the peoples and States of the region. In this connection, we welcome the support for this endeavour expressed on 10 March by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Lastly, we should like to affirm the inalienable right of the States parties to the Treaty in the region to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria for his statement. I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of China, Ambassador Wang.

Mr. Wang Qun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation would like to express its gratitude to you for the vast amount of work you have done during your presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Under your distinguished leadership, the Conference has maintained an atmosphere of constructive cooperation. Member States held informal debates on the seven agenda items, and China would like to express its appreciation to you, as President, and to the coordinators for all your efforts.

China has listened carefully to the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt setting out his views on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We believe that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone is an important step towards achieving the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons; it is also of great significance for the promotion of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear proliferation as well as the promotion of regional and global peace and security. Strengthening efforts to prevent proliferation in the Middle East region is a matter of the utmost urgency. Both the 1995 and the 2000 NPT Review Conferences adopted decisions on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. China has consistently respected and supported the efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in accordance with the conditions prevailing in their own regions and on the basis of voluntary agreements and equitable consultations. China sincerely hopes that the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly will be effectively implemented, and that all parties at the forthcoming third session of the Preparatory Committee for the eighth NPT Review Conference will endeavour to find ways of implementing the resolutions on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East adopted at the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences.

The President: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of China for his statement. I now give the floor to the distinguished delegation of Israel.

Mr. Itzhaki (Israel): Mr. President, at the outset, as this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on the way you carry out your duties. We expect other P-6 members also to fulfil their presidency

functions in a professional and impartial way, not allowing politics to stand in the way and maintaining the credibility of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

We did not plan to take the floor at this stage. However, we heard earlier on the statement made by Egypt and others on a desire to implement a resolution that was adopted in a forum that Israel, as you all know, is not a State party to. This resolution was adopted without Israel being part of its consolidation. Yet, we are here in the Conference on Disarmament — and not in the NPT context — and we should be wary of that fact.

I wish to remind everyone that Israel joins the consensus on the resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone within the context of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. We do that notwithstanding major substantive difficulties that we have with certain provisions of that resolution.

I also wish to recall that it has already been well established and recognized in many international documents, dating back to SSOD-1, followed by other documents and the United Nations Disarmament Commission, that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is to be based on arrangements freely arrived at by all the States of the region concerned. The experience of other regions in the world, where nuclear-weapon-free zones have been established, is that it was done when conditions in the region so allowed and a significant reduction in threats was prevalent. The same applies also to the situation in the Middle East, where States are now actively engaged in proliferation, including of nuclear weapons, as well as actively supporting terrorists. The lack of peace and mutual recognition and the threats against the existence of my State unfortunately remain a major feature of the political culture in my region.

Bringing the issue of the establishment of a nuclear-free zone to the Conference on Disarmament actually contradicts the concept of arrangements freely arrived at by all the States of the region concerned. It is yet another attempt to avoid direct dialogue with Israel and to continue the culture of hatred and not promoting anything that would allow the establishment of that zone.

Any State in the region, including the State in this room, knows exactly where we are and is free to come and contact us any time for a direct dialogue based on peace and mutual security. Certainly, terminology like compelling or forcing one State is not very helpful in that direction.

The President: I thank the distinguished delegate of Israel for his statement.

I have no other speakers on my list. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case. Bangladesh, you have the floor.

Mr. Kazi (Bangladesh): Mr. President, at the outset I would like to offer my Ambassador's apologies for not being able to remain here, since he had to chair another meeting in this building.

On behalf of the Group of 21, we would like to congratulate you and your team on the successful completion of the second presidency of the 2009 session.

My delegation feels privileged to express, on behalf of the Group, our deep appreciation and gratitude for your able stewardship of the Conference on Disarmament.

We appreciate the important tasks accomplished during your tenure as President. We commend your leadership in arriving at consensus through broad-based consultations on issues where the regional groups had divergent views. We recognize your efforts to further energize the momentum of our work. We thank you for setting the tone of our future deliberations.

We acknowledge that under your presidency a number of high-level dignitaries from member States addressed the Conference on Disarmament within the framework of the High-Level Segment. Likewise, thematic debates were held under all items of our agenda.

As a member of the Group of 21, you have made our Group proud by your committed leadership at the helm of the Conference. We look forward to benefiting from your rich experience and talents in the days ahead.

We are pleased to see that you will pass on the baton to yet another member of our Group, the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria. We have full faith in your successor's wisdom and ability to guide our work. We wish him every success and assure him of our unstinting support in carrying out his mandate.

The President: I thank the distinguished delegate of Bangladesh for his statement. I also thank him in particular for his kind words to the Chair.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this time? That does not seem to be the case.

May I now invite the Conference to consider two additional requests received from States not members of the Conference to participate in our work as observers during this session. The requests are contained in document CD/WP.551/Add.4 and were received from Armenia and Iceland.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite Armenia and Iceland to participate in the work of the Conference according to its rules of procedure?

It is so decided.

May I at this point thank all delegations for the kind words they have expressed towards the Chair from time to time during our presidency of the Conference? As this is the last plenary meeting under the presidency of Zimbabwe, I would like to take the opportunity to provide you with some small comments.

Today marks the end of my presidency of the 2009 sessional segment of the Conference on Disarmament. The last four weeks have been a period of consultations, listening and learning. What I have learned has enormously enriched me personally, and I hope my country will be better disposed to the Conference on Disarmament in consequence.

In particular, I must express my gratitude to a team of colleague Ambassadors without whose cooperation and generosity of spirit I could not have done much. These P-6 colleagues, the Ambassadors of Viet Nam, Algeria, Argentina, Australia and Austria, are real pillars of our collective work here. Let me express my gratitude to them for their solid commitment to disarmament and for their friendship.

I believe I speak for all of us when I say what a privilege it has been and an honour for us to listen to significant statements from distinguished visitors from the capitals of Norway, Chile, Italy and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and indeed only this morning, from Germany, in the period of Zimbabwe's humble presidency. These visitors were finally complemented by His Excellency Mr. Sergei Lavrov, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, who delivered an important address to the Conference on Disarmament on 7 March 2009. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all these visitors.

On 10 March 2009, the coordinators of the seven thematic topics arising from our organizational framework contained in CD/WP.553 presented the presidency with oral summaries of debates under their guidance. I thank the distinguished Ambassadors of Chile, Italy, Canada, Senegal, Bulgaria, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, in no particular order, for their distinguished work. The presidency will consider how to dispose of their work later.

Finally, we could never achieve anything in the Conference without the dedicated commitment of the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament. I thank them very much for their commitment to our work and their good-natured friendship.

I wish my successor, the distinguished Ambassador of Algeria, a colleague-brother Idriss Jazaïry, all success.

To Mr. Mucheka from my Mission, I thank him for ensuring that I did or said nothing here to discredit our dear country, Zimbabwe.

I thank you all.

This concludes our business for today. The next formal meeting of the Conference will take place on Tuesday, 17 March, at 10 a.m. in this chamber. The distinguished Foreign Minister of Algeria will address the Conference at that time.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

The meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.