

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and fifty-ninth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 5 June 2018, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Hussam Edin Aala (Syrian Arab Republic)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Distinguished colleagues, good morning. I now declare open the 1459th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen. Since our last plenary meeting, we have received a request from a delegation that wishes to participate in our work as a non-member State. The request is contained in document CD/WP.604/Add.7, which we received after 3 p.m. yesterday, Tuesday, 4 June 2018. Are there any comments on this request? I believe the request has been distributed among the members. May I take it that the Conference wishes to accept this State's request to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Before continuing, I will suspend the meeting for a moment to give the representative of the non-member State that has been invited to participate in the work of the Conference the opportunity to take his allocated seat in the conference room.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to begin our meeting today by providing an update on the consultations that I have held since our last meeting. As I explained in my opening statement at the last plenary meeting, the main focus of the presidency is to explore new ways to achieve consensus among member States on the Conference's programme of work. As I intend to hold further bilateral consultations this week in order to obtain a broader understanding of the issues on the agenda, I would like to emphasize that I wish to engage with member States in an open and positive manner in order to establish their positions and priorities, based on the understanding that all of us – and not just the presidency – have a responsibility to work towards achieving consensus on the Conference's programme of work.

At this point, I can say that, during my bilateral consultations with member States and my consultations with the regional group coordinators, there was overall support for the President fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to him under rule 29 of the Conference's rules of procedure, and many States underlined the importance of maintaining the negotiating mandate that is the *raison d'être* of the Conference on Disarmament. We also discussed the priorities of those States that participated in the consultations. As I have said in the past, these efforts do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they aim to achieve progress along two parallel tracks by allowing the subsidiary bodies to proceed with their work as well. This approach takes into account the fact that the decision contained in document CD/2119 is without prejudice to the responsibilities entrusted to the President under the rules of procedure, and the fact that the subsidiary bodies and the President are working towards the same goal.

As part of our efforts to establish a comprehensive and integrated vision, it was therefore important that I, in my role as President, meet with the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies to hear their preliminary assessment of the discussions held, seek their views and expectations regarding the work of the subsidiary bodies during the current session and identify any common ground that could be built on during attempts to find consensus on a programme of work at this stage of the Conference's activities. The meeting held yesterday, Monday, with the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies provided a useful opportunity to listen to a presentation on the work of the third and fifth subsidiary bodies and to the plans put forward by the coordinator of the first body, which will begin its work later this month. I would therefore like to express my thanks to the coordinators who participated in the meeting and my appreciation for the valuable comments made.

However, the absence of the coordinators of the second and fourth subsidiary bodies meant that the presidency was unable to make a comprehensive assessment of the situation and, therefore, unable to fulfil its responsibilities. This also raised questions regarding the commitment of some coordinators to upholding the rules of procedure and fulfilling their mandate pursuant to the decisions of the Conference, without political considerations, as well as regarding their role in consolidating an atmosphere of cooperation and constructive

dialogue, in the subsidiary bodies and in the Conference. We need to find an approach based on constructive engagement and the exchange of ideas in order to overcome the deadlock that the Conference is facing and to establish consensus on how to proceed in our work on the substantive items on our agenda. This is what I am going to try to do over the next few days of this presidency.

Before I give the floor to the first speaker on my list, I would like to ask you all to provide written statements to the interpreters in order to facilitate the discussion. The first speaker on my list is Ambassador Amil of Pakistan. You have the floor, Ambassador.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): Thank you, Mr. President. A Group of 21 Chair who attended the presidential consultations held yesterday said that two of the five coordinators of the subsidiary bodies refused to meet the President of the Conference on Disarmament on his invitation. We understand that the President wanted to consult with all five of the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies to receive an update on the latest state of play and to provide the requisite guidance, harmonizing with them his efforts to draft a programme of work. The President was well within his rights. As required in rule 29 of the Conference's rules of procedure, it is the responsibility of the President to draft a programme of work and present it for the Conference's consideration. It is also clearly stipulated in paragraph 2 of the decision contained in document CD/2119 of 16 February 2018 that "each subsidiary body will be chaired by a coordinator appointed by the Conference, under the guidance of the President on the basis of equitable regional distribution".

We find it unfortunate and regrettable that two of the coordinators have chosen to ignore the terms of a decision of the Conference. We should not allow our political views regarding a fellow member State to discredit the office of the Conference's President or allow them to be a reason to implement the decisions of the Conference selectively. If those two coordinators were not comfortable working with one of the six Presidents of the year, they should not have volunteered for these positions in the first place. As stated by my delegation at the last plenary, the Conference should not become a victim of our posturing and politicking on issues that are not related to its substantive agenda. Extraneous issues should not undermine the automatically rotating presidency and the smooth functioning of the Conference. We sincerely hope that the refusal by the two coordinators to engage with the current President will not prove to be the unravelling of the hard-won consensus based on a delicately balanced and carefully crafted compromise to hold substantive work in the Conference. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Permanent Representative of Pakistan and I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cleobury (United Kingdom): Thank you. We are meeting today just weeks after another shocking violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in Syria. Up to 75 people, including children, were killed in a despicable and barbaric attack in Duma on 7 April. The World Health Organization has reported that 500 patients seen by its partners in Syria had symptoms consistent with chemical weapons exposure. The world has seen the harrowing images of men, women and children lying dead with foam in their mouths. These were innocent families who at the time the chemical weapon was unleashed were seeking shelter underground in basements. First-hand accounts from non-governmental organizations and aid workers have detailed burns to the eyes, suffocation and skin discolouration, with a chlorine-like odour surrounding the victims.

The Syrian regime has an abhorrent record of using chemical weapons against its own people. Chemical weapons use has become an all-too-regular weapon of war in the Syrian conflict. The evidence is well known. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has recorded more than 390 allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria since the fact-finding mission was established in 2014. The OPCW–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has found Syria responsible for using chemical weapons, including chlorine and sarin, on four occasions between 2014 and 2017.

Syria has not provided OPCW with a complete account of its chemical weapons programme. The Director General of OPCW reported in March that Syria had not provided credible evidence to account for 22 serious issues. That includes the quantities of agents Syria possessed, the type of agent and the munitions used for delivery. Based on the

persistent pattern of behaviour and the cumulative analysis of specific incidents, we assess it as highly likely that the Syrian regime has continued to use chemical weapons since the attack on Khan Shaykhun a year ago. All of the evidence suggests that, if unchecked, it will continue to do so.

As these examples show, the global norm against chemical weapons is under threat. We remain deeply concerned about the use of chemical weapons around the world in spite of the long-standing norm against their use. That is why the United Kingdom, together with the Governments of Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Poland, Romania and the United States, called for a special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention that will be convened later this month. This will be a key moment for the international community to consider ways to strengthen OPCW. We encourage all countries to attend. We will continue to work tirelessly to hold those responsible for breaches of international norms and agreements to account and to uphold and defend the global consensus that chemical weapons should not be used. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): As we are still at the start of our discussion, I would like to draw colleagues' attention to the importance of ensuring that our debates maintain a constructive focus on our collective work, in order to achieve success in the Conference's activities. Insisting on politicizing our work in the way that we have seen does nothing to help us achieve that goal. Of course, every State has the right to raise any issues related to the agenda of the Conference that it feels should be discussed. However, I hope that our discussion will respect the Conference's rules of procedure and will remain focused on the items included on the agenda that was adopted at the start of the year.

Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I would like to remind colleagues of the importance – in order to respect the serious nature of our deliberations – of using diplomatic language when addressing other members of the Conference and of refraining from referring to States by anything other than their official names. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Davison (Canada): Colleagues, I wish to reiterate Canada's deep regret that Syria has assumed the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, given its repeated violations of its disarmament obligations. Last October, for the fourth time, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism found that the Assad regime was responsible for chemical weapons use. Most distressingly, the direct cost of this disregard of international law and global norms is paid by the Syrian people.

Last week, we gave voice to the victims of the horrific Khan Shaykhun chemical attack, which shocked the world, with images of helpless children suffering from the effects of sarin exposure. Today, we repeat eyewitness accounts of the chlorine attack on Talmenes on 21 April 2014, which was attributed to the Syrian Government in the Mechanism's third report of August 2016.

(*spoke in French*)

Human Rights Watch interviewed several witnesses to the dropping of barrel bombs on Talmenes. The following is a quotation from the account of a Syrian surgeon interviewed by Human Rights Watch:

"It was chaos. There were lots of people, maybe hundreds. Friends and family rushed outside. I think that around 60 or 70 people were injured. I did not see any dead. The symptoms varied from person to person. Some were very simple: a large number of people were having difficulty breathing, while others had suffered burns on their skin. Lots of people's eyes were red and streaming. Many people were finding it hard to breathe. We gave them oxygen and cleaned up their eyes. We used hydrocortisone for the most serious cases. I did not see anyone with constricting pupils. The condition of many of those who were lightly injured improved thanks to the oxygen. Some people were seriously injured, suffering from the effects of the gas or the explosion. I think that around 50 to 55 people were suffering the effects of the gas, while others were suffering the effects of the explosion."

Another witness described the attack as follows:

“I was less than a kilometre away and saw the helicopter hovering and dropping the bomb. I followed the dark yellow smoke. It was the first time that I had seen smoke that colour. Two barrel bombs fell. They both exploded. As soon as I arrived, I smelt a strong, disgusting smell, I started coughing and my eyes started streaming. I did not know what was going on, but the people around me were suffocating. The attack happened near the field hospital, so we started evacuating the wounded. There were ambulances on site, but the paramedics had no masks. They were finding it difficult to move the wounded, because they were suffering, too. When we arrived at the hospital, I saw at least 100 people struggling to breathe, coughing or shaking. That number is an estimate, because the hospital wards can only hold 50 to 60 people, but that day there were people in the corridors and outside the hospital. I did not see anyone injured by shrapnel.”

The witness went on to report that a doctor had informed him that 15 victims in critical condition had been transferred to Turkey and that 3, including 2 children, had died from their injuries.

A third person, a member of the medical team, provided the following witness statement:

“I was in the field hospital in Talmenes. The helicopter released a barrel bomb that fell on the Mostapha al-Bakri school, which is 100 metres from the field hospital and was empty. I went there with the medical team. When I arrived, there was a nauseating smell in the air. I saw yellow smoke, but I did not know that it was chlorine. It struck me that there had not been a large explosion and that there was not a lot of physical damage. Part of the school had been damaged by the explosion and so had a room in an empty house. I saw 15 to 20 people coughing, suffocating or passing out. Most were women and some were children. Two medical workers became intoxicated upon arrival at the explosion site. I started coughing, but my colleagues were suffocating and had to be transferred to the field hospital. In all, 122 people were affected.”

(spoke in English)

This testimony clearly shows serious contempt for disarmament obligations and international norms of behaviour. But similar behaviour by Syria goes well beyond the Chemical Weapons Convention. This week, the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is meeting in Vienna. As Canada has consistently done, we will raise our concerns there about ongoing nuclear non-compliance by Syria and hold it to account until it resolves this issue.

Syria constructed a covert nuclear reactor in Dayr al-Zawr, since destroyed, which it did not declare to IAEA, thereby failing to comply with its obligations under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. Seven years after the IAEA Board found Syria to be in non-compliance, Syria has taken no action to address this situation and continues to refuse IAEA access to facilities related to the former reactor in Dayr al-Zawr or to answer IAEA questions on this issue.

Regrettably, the State currently presiding over the Conference is wilfully and arrogantly disregarding international law and its obligations under several non-proliferation and disarmament-related treaties. Syria’s presidency further erodes the credibility of this body. This situation has led to serious reflection by Conference members in recognition of the importance of accountability and denying impunity for behaviour which flouts international disarmament norms. Thank you.

The President *(spoke in Arabic)*: The next speaker on my list is the representative of China, Ambassador Fu Cong. You have the floor, Ambassador.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) *(spoke in Chinese)*: Mr. President, the Chinese delegation thanks you for your briefing on recent work and appreciates the transparent and constructive approach you have taken in consultations with all sides. China supports your

continued work in that regard, in accordance with the relevant mandates in the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament.

In recent years, under the joint efforts of the previous three Presidents of the Conference and of all parties, the five subsidiary bodies, established by the Conference and geared toward frank and in-depth discussion of all topics, have displayed positive momentum. During this period, the five coordinators have done a great deal of work. In line with the decision contained in document CD/2119, the subsidiary bodies are to be guided in their work by the President. For that reason, we hope that the coordinators of all the subsidiary bodies cooperate closely with the President and communicate with him or her in a timely manner, jointly seizing upon the current favourable momentum accumulated in the discussions of the subsidiary bodies and constantly pushing the discussions to a deeper level, thereby creating good conditions for the Conference to achieve a comprehensive and balanced programme of work at an early date.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Ambassador. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Cuba. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Pérez Álvarez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Ambassador. We would like to thank you for the information that you have provided today in your capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament. We would also like to thank you for the work that you have done and the consultations that you have held with the representatives of the regional groups and the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies in accordance with the mandate and rules of procedure of this Conference.

We wish to express our concern, like the delegations of Pakistan and China, regarding the importance of respecting the rules of procedure and the decisions adopted by consensus by this body. We are concerned that the decision contained in document CD/2119 and the rules of procedure of the Conference are not being respected. The coordinators of the subsidiary bodies should be guided by the President of the Conference, since, as you have rightly stated, the subsidiary bodies and the President, together, are a mechanism for progressing towards the establishment of a programme of work, common features through which we can find common ground on which to move the Conference forward.

Cuba hopes that all member States of the Conference will work proactively and respect the mandate of the President and the rules of procedure of the Conference to ensure that this body can carry out substantive work, in line with our collective goal. If certain delegations, specifically certain coordinators, namely the coordinators of the second and fourth subsidiary bodies, who are, if I understand correctly, the representatives of the Netherlands and Germany, continue to flout the norms and rules of this forum, responsibility for the breakdown of the machinery we have built will fall to them.

In sum, we call on all those who have been delegated a responsibility by the other members to fulfil their duties, to respect the rules of procedure and to respect the functions entrusted to them by all members of the Conference. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Cuba for her statement, and I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Mr. President, Australia strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons. There is no circumstance that justifies the use of such weapons. Some have said that the Conference on Disarmament is not a judicial or investigative body and that we should leave such matters to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Security Council and focus on our business of developing a programme of work. As the body which negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Conference has a legitimate interest in its effectiveness and implementation. Indeed, if we cannot ensure accountability and compliance with existing commitments, what does that mean for the credibility of future instruments?

A programme of work in the Conference is meaningless without trust and confidence that States intend to comply with their commitments. The Conference does not exist in a vacuum. Collectively, we need to strengthen the rules-based international order

which is essential to the security, sovereignty and economic stability of all countries – large and small.

The international community cannot accept any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, and needs to reassert the critical importance of upholding obligations under international law. We deplore Syria's ongoing non-compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. There must be consequences for those who violate the global norm prohibiting the use of chemical weapons. It is unconscionable that we remain without a formal, international mechanism able to attribute responsibility for chemical weapons use in Syria because of the intransigence of some States. We call on all States parties to support and attend the Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention later this month to reaffirm our commitment to the Convention at a time when global non-proliferation arrangements are under threat and to express our full support for the thorough, comprehensive and impartial work of OPCW, including its fact-finding mission and Declaration Assessment Team in Syria.

We also support the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, a timely, practical cross-regional initiative to reinforce the norm and support the existing international architecture. Responsible States do not look the other way when fundamental norms of the international community are breached. Those who use, enable or shield the use of chemical weapons must be brought to account. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Bulgaria, who, I understand, wishes to speak on behalf of the European Union. Before giving her the floor, however, I would like to ask the interpreters to ensure that they are accurate in their interpretation of what the President says. Before I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Bulgaria, who, I understand, would like to speak on behalf of the European Union, I would like to request clarification from the secretariat regarding the status of the European Union in the Conference. Colleagues from a number of member States have asked me about this, because there are several recognized geographical groups that operate in the context of the Conference and, by giving the floor to representatives of the European Union, the Conference is in effect giving the floor to some non-member States. So, before I give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria, I would like to ask the secretariat to clarify this matter.

Mr. Kalbusch (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Thank you, Mr. President. We understand that it is Bulgaria that is speaking, and the secretariat does not have any further information on that, but we can look into the issue and report back to you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I understand that Bulgaria has asked to speak in its national capacity. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Kemppainen (Bulgaria): Thank you. Bulgaria has not asked for the floor in its national capacity but has the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. All European Union member States are represented at non-ambassadorial level at today's plenary meeting. We take this opportunity to reiterate our strong and constant support for the Chemical Weapons Convention and the 1925 Geneva Protocol. We call on all Conference on Disarmament members to defend the Chemical Weapons Convention and continue to work for its universalization and full implementation.

We reaffirm the total prohibition of chemical weapons and our commitment to their elimination worldwide. The use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons, by anyone, be it a State or a non-State actor, anywhere and under any circumstances, is abhorrent and must be rigorously condemned. It is a war crime and may amount to a crime against humanity. There can be no impunity and those responsible for such acts must be held accountable. The European Union recalls that, as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Syrian Arab Republic has explicitly obligated itself not to possess, develop or use chemical weapons. We strongly condemn the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Armed Forces and Daesh, as confirmed by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism.

We fully support the view that the OPCW fact-finding mission should continue investigating allegations of use of chemical weapons and that the Declaration Assessment Team should clarify the gaps and discrepancies in the Syrian declaration until it is satisfied that that country's chemical weapons programme is fully declared and irreversibly dismantled. We deeply regret that the mandate of the OPCW–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) to identify perpetrators of chemical attacks in Syria was not renewed in November last year. Restoring an independent mechanism for attribution is particularly important in this regard.

It is the international community's task and responsibility to identify and hold accountable individuals, entities, groups or Governments responsible for the use or development of chemical weapons and for the use of toxic chemicals as weapons. In this regard, the European Union welcomes the efforts conducted within the framework of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. The European Union has consistently taken action against the confirmed use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Armed Forces and Daesh by imposing restrictive measures. In July 2017 and in March 2018, the European Union imposed additional restrictive measures against Syrian high-level officials and scientists for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons. We remain ready to consider imposing further measures, as appropriate.

The current context of re-emergence of chemical weapons, bearing in mind the repeated chemical attacks in Syria, the Salisbury incident in the United Kingdom, the incident at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and the allegations of the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors in Iraq, supports the holding of the Special Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention on 26 and 27 June in The Hague. We encourage all countries to attend the Conference and take the opportunity to consider how best to respond to the current challenges to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Excellencies, the Conference on Disarmament remains the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum and its continued relevance is of utmost importance to the European Union. In accordance with the decision contained in document CD/2119, adopted by the plenary on 16 February, five subsidiary bodies have been established for this year's session to reach an understanding on the areas of commonality, deepen technical discussions and broaden areas of agreement and consider effective measures, including legal instruments for negotiations.

We fully support the continuation of substantive work by the subsidiary bodies and their coordinators rather than the conducting of parallel consultations with the current presidency, which does not have the necessary credibility or legitimacy to lead our work due to its repeated grave violations of international law that we all have the obligation to uphold. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my understanding that the statement made by the representative of Bulgaria will be dealt with in the light of the clarifications that the United Nations is going to provide regarding the legal status of statements made by the European Union at the Conference. I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Díaz Mendoza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. We thank you for the information that you have provided and the transparent and constructive way in which you have led our work. My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express support for the statements of the delegations of Pakistan, China and Cuba.

The work of the Conference on Disarmament must steer clear of political manipulation and double standards. Rather, it must support the work of the presidency. The President of the Conference told us last week that his plan of work would consist in holding bilateral meetings with the regional coordinators, member States of the Conference and the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies. Such work is entirely consistent with rule 29 of the rules of procedure, insofar as it is the President's responsibility to formulate a programme of work and submit it for the consideration of the Conference.

Operative paragraph 2 of the decision contained in document CD/2119 is very clear: “Each subsidiary body will be chaired by a coordinator appointed by the Conference, under the guidance of the President on the basis of equitable regional distribution.” Accordingly, we hope that the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies will work together with the President and fulfil the mandate given to them.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to reiterate its commitment to this forum and to multilateralism. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for her statement, and I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Rest assured of my delegation’s support and cooperation. The Brazilian delegation remains ready to engage constructively and to contribute to efforts to advance the work of the Conference. We welcome the decision adopted by the Conference to establish five subsidiary bodies. We hope that the activities of these bodies, as well as the informal consultations undertaken by the presidencies, will provide a substantive contribution to the four core items on the agenda of the Conference – namely, nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, a fissile material cut-off treaty and negative security assurances, as well as emerging and other issues relevant to substantive work of the Conference considered by subsidiary body 5. I would just like to specify that, as coordinator of subsidiary body 3, I attended the consultation that you convened yesterday.

Brazil supports focusing our work in the Conference on the comprehensive tasks ahead of us in the five subsidiary bodies. There is work to be done, and time is limited. As the United Nations Secretary-General stated in his speech to launch the Agenda for Disarmament at the University of Geneva, the Conference is one of the principal multilateral disarmament forums. We should not forget that it is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Therefore, we should prioritize the Conference over issues that could be dealt with better and most appropriately in other forums.

Observance of the Conference’s rules of procedure, including its monthly rotation, which we have on certain occasions considered a hindrance for the progress of work, is nevertheless an integral part of the rules that bind us together in this august governing body, as are other aspects cherished by many, such as the consensus-based decision-making.

Mr. President, Brazil vehemently repudiates the use of any weapon of mass destruction under any circumstances and justification. And this has guided our participation in and support for all disarmament treaties prohibiting such weapons, including, more recently, the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, which, together with the treaties on the prohibition of chemical weapons and on the prohibition of biological weapons, composes a triad covering all weapons of mass destruction developed in recent decades and, unfortunately, still in existence and in deployment.

Regarding allegations of use of chemical and biological weapons, we understand that the respective prohibition treaties provide the most adequate framework for dealing with such situations, as they provide for the expertise required to address complex technical aspects associated with such allegations. Specifically, with respect to chemical weapons, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, with its full-blown organization, secretariat and network of laboratories and inspection capabilities to support its implementation, is widely lauded as one of the most complete disarmament treaties.

The central role of the Security Council in peace and security issues is well known to all, and includes its competence to attribute responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We have accordingly declared our support for renewing the mandate of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism as an important step regarding the investigations of the chemical incidents in the conflict in Syria.

With respect to the situation in Syria, Brazil's long-standing position is that there are no possible military solutions to the conflict that can be solved only by political and diplomatic means. We also support complementary efforts through the Geneva and Astana processes. Any solution to the conflict should ensure the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

My delegation is confident that, under your guidance, we will be able to continue our joint efforts to carry forward the decisions contained in documents CD/2119 and CD/2126 with a view to re-establishing and evolving a substantive work dynamic in the Conference on Disarmament towards a programme of work. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for your kind words regarding this presidency. Thank you in particular for the important and valuable points that you made in your statement, which we hope will help to reorder the work of the Conference more effectively and constructively so that we can make real progress in our joint efforts to free the Conference from the state of polarization and politicization that it is currently in. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Iran. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Heidari (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you very much, Mr. President. First and foremost, I would like to sincerely thank you for the very active bilateral consultation that you have held to seek the views of the member States regarding the programme of work, which is the responsibility of the President according to the rules of procedure.

Mr. President, it is sad that the two of the coordinators refused to meet with you to discuss the progress in their subsidiary bodies. That is against the decision contained in document CD/2119 and, of course, the rules of procedure and the principle of impartiality upon which they have been appointed. This sets an unfortunate precedent in the work of the Conference on Disarmament, and Iran hopes very much that those respected coordinators revisit their decision and will meet you and discuss the progress in their subsidiary bodies, as the decision contained in document CD/2119 is very clear in terms of the obligation of the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies to work under the guidance of the President. Having said that, we support what has been said by the previous delegations – Pakistan, China, Cuba, Venezuela and Brazil – regarding the importance of the substantive work of the Conference and the importance of the consultation between the coordinators and the President. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Heredia Acosta (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, everyone. As this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor, I would like to reiterate that Mexico is committed to this body, the Conference on Disarmament, its mandate and its proceedings. We also wish to stress the importance of continuing the work of your presidency in order to find common ground that will allow us to make progress towards the establishment of a programme of work and to restore this body's negotiating mandate.

At the same time, Mr. President, Mexico can only continue to express its deep concern regarding the situation in Syria, especially the recent use of chemical weapons, which we have, of course, condemned in the strongest of terms and at the highest level. Mexico hopes that the use of such weapons, which has such terrible consequences, will be brought to an end within the framework of international law and through multilateral instruments and that investigations will continue so that responsibility can be assigned and appropriate sanctions imposed. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement. I join him in condemning the use of chemical weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction at any place, at any time and on any pretext. I believe that all members present here today share that principled position. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Germany. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Pilz (Germany): Distinguished delegates, former Chancellor Willy Brandt once said: “If for too long one does not prevent a wrong, one paves the way for further wrongs.” It is in this respect that we cannot let the heinous crimes currently committed in Syria go without comment.

While we accept the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament, under which the presidency rotates in alphabetical order, we deeply regret that the presidency has fallen to Syria. The presidency of this most important organization should be a bright example of the goal which it represents – furthering peace by way of disarmament. It is a cynical coincidence that the State in blatant violation of this objective is chairing the Conference. While a number of points on Syria’s disarmament track record remain at variance with its obligations, especially its non-compliance under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Syria’s infractions concerning its use of chemical weapons are probably the most flagrant of all violations.

For us, three things are of vital importance. First, we demand that Syria stop using chemical weapons immediately. Reports of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism as well as the Human Rights Council’s Independent International Commission of Inquiry have all indicated that the Syrian regime bears the responsibility for the use of chemical weapons such as chlorine and mustard gas in Syria. We condemn, in the strongest terms, any use of chemical weapons in Syria and the deliberate targeting of civilians.

Second, Syria must finally declare its entire chemical weapons programme and destroy it under the surveillance of OPCW. In addition to the reports just mentioned, the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team has identified a growing number of inconsistencies and gaps as regards the initial Syrian declarations. Many questions are left unanswered. We call on Syria to provide exactly these answers.

Third, the current state of impunity for the perpetrators is completely unacceptable. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be identified and eventually be held accountable. Germany cannot and will not accept that the use of chemical weapons in Syria be allowed to erode the non-use norm enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention. Our objective is to strengthen the Convention as a pillar of the international arms control and non-proliferation architecture. In this context, we are looking forward to the Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention that will take place in June.

Distinguished delegates, we remain committed to the goals that this organization stands for. It is not by shying away from our responsibilities that we will succeed in meeting our disarmament objectives. Let this statement be understood as a reminder that it is deeds, not words, that we are in need of. We call once again upon Syria to respect its commitments and cease its infractions, which undermine not only the Conference but also peace as a whole.

Let me also, Mr. President, make an additional remark concerning the allegations directed against my country pertaining to our role as coordinator of subsidiary body 4. We think that the subsidiary body has successfully commenced its work under our coordination. With regard to the mandate contained in document CD/2119, we see no need for consultations at the current juncture. That is why we have not participated in them. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I would like to refer to the last point that the representative of Germany raised. Today’s discussion is not based on allegations against his country; rather, it is an expression of the legitimate concern voiced by the presidency and by a significant number of member States regarding the behaviour of some of the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies, who are violating the rules of procedure, undermining the role of the presidency of the Conference and disregarding the mandate entrusted to them under the decision contained in document CD/2119. No specific allegations have been made against any specific country. With this observation, I give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands. You have the floor, Madam.

Ms. Claringbould (Netherlands): Thank you. Mr. President, I will limit my remarks to the issue of the meeting the presidency convened for the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies of the Conference on Disarmament.

For that purpose, I would like to recall the decision contained in document CD/2119, which was adopted by this Conference on 19 February 2018 and led to the establishment of the five subsidiary bodies. This decision contains explicit language on the role of the presidency with regard to the subsidiary bodies. Operative paragraph 2 of the decision that was referred to by many delegations reads: "Each subsidiary body will be chaired by a coordinator appointed by the Conference, under the guidance of the President on the basis of equitable regional distribution." The guidance therefore refers to the appointment of the coordinators. As we all know, the Swedish and the Swiss presidencies held meetings with the future coordinators with a view to implementing this operative paragraph. The Conference then adopted the decision contained in document CD/2126 on 27 March under the Swiss presidency and its able guidance. In that decision, the Conference decided to appoint the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies on the basis of equitable geographic distribution, as stated in operative paragraph 2. With that decision, the paragraph was implemented, and no further role of the presidency in that regard is foreseen. Operative paragraph 5, the other operative paragraph that refers to the Conference's presidency, reads as follows: "The report on the progress achieved and agreed on in each subsidiary body would be submitted by its coordinator to the Conference on Disarmament, through its President, for adoption and due reflection ...".

The presidency will be called upon again when the report is ready to go to the Conference, through the President, for adoption, and as the timetable in the decision contained in document CD/2126 indicates, that is not expected until August at the earliest. In the Netherlands' view, the decision does not foresee a role for the presidency in the period in between in relation to the subsidiary bodies.

Also, it was not clear what the purpose of the meeting convened by the President was, as it had not been communicated clearly. The question therefore arises: namely, why is there suddenly such urgency or need for a meeting of the coordinators? Why does the presidency persist on this point that is not even part of the mandate? The Netherlands believes that there is no urgency or need, a belief we communicated through the secretariat.

Further on this issue, I would like to refer to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union on this matter. The Netherlands is conducting the work of the subsidiary bodies according to the responsibilities conveyed by the decisions contained in documents CD/2119 and CD/2126 and we intend to continue to take our responsibility in this way.

Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of the Netherlands for the clarifications provided regarding the role of the coordinator of the subsidiary body that is led by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands. Clearly, the explanation she provided regarding the provisions of the decision contained in document CD/2119 is not based on the common understanding accepted by the other members of the Conference. Although I certainly do not wish to enter into a legal discussion of this issue, it is clear that not everyone in this chamber agrees with that interpretation. Secondly, I would like to remind the distinguished representative of the Netherlands of what the rules of procedure say regarding the role of the presidency, especially rule 29, which states that the President, during his or her mandate, has a responsibility to explore ways to achieve consensus on a possible programme of work. The subsidiary bodies and the presidency should, therefore, be working towards the same goal and, if that goal is to be achieved, the presidency needs to have a comprehensive and objective overview of the discussions held in the subsidiary bodies. The intention of the presidency was certainly not to interfere in the work of the subsidiary bodies. I made clear what the objective was at the very first meeting at which I requested a meeting with the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies. I also made clear that I intended to work on the basis of their comments during the bilateral consultations that I intend to hold. With these clarifications, I give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Ms. Dallafior (Switzerland): Thank you very much, Mr. President. As the outgoing President, I feel compelled to take the floor regarding the comments made in relation to the

subsidiary bodies. The terms of reference of the subsidiary bodies were established by two decisions adopted by consensus by the Conference on Disarmament. These decisions establish five subsidiary bodies, together with their mandate, and provide the name of the coordinator for each of these bodies as well as the dates when they will meet. The decisions also indicate the relationship between the Conference plenary and the subsidiary bodies. The subsidiary bodies will report to the plenary through the presidency only once they have completed their activities in August. Subsidiary bodies are not mandated to report to the Conference plenary on a regular basis or to any Conference office holder. They may do so if they wish but do not have to and do not need to.

As to operative paragraph 2 in the decision adopted on 19 February 2018, the guidance of the presidency refers to the appointment of the coordinators, and this is exactly what was done first under the Swedish presidency and then under the Swiss presidency. As holders of the presidency, we coordinated, held consultations to identify the five coordinators and then brought our recommendations to the plenary for adoption. We must now apply these rules. We must apply and respect the decision we have collectively taken as the Conference plenary.

I would also like to take the opportunity to add that the establishment of the subsidiary bodies may seem a small step, but it is a welcome and potentially significant step forward for the Conference. It has attracted attention beyond the confines of these walls and raised expectations. It is important for the subsidiary bodies now to be in a position to fulfil their substantive mandate unaffected by political issues that have no relation to their mandate. Having their mandates affected by political issues could undermine the subsidiary bodies and would do a disservice to the Conference. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Ambassador Dallafior. I join the Ambassador in emphasizing the importance of respecting the decisions and resolutions that the Conference has adopted. I simply wish to clarify that the purpose of the invitation to meet with the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies was not to ask them – directly or via the presidency – to present reports on their work to the plenary meeting. Rather, as I have just said, the aim was to enable the President to gain a complete overview of the ongoing discussions before holding bilateral consultations. I believe that this is consistent with the responsibilities of the presidency in this regard. There was no hidden agenda, and this was not a manoeuvre driven by political considerations. We have, unfortunately, encountered positions governed by such considerations in certain responses to the presidency's invitation. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, who has asked to speak again.

Mr. Davison (Canada): Thank you. I just wanted to join the Netherlands and Switzerland in clarifying – and agreeing with them – that the decision contained in document CD/2119 was clear about the division of responsibilities and, in particular, about what the President's role was going to be until the reports were ready. I simply find that re-examining the purpose of the subsidiary bodies, debating again and being too intrusive with regard to their functioning would be a kind of mischief-making. They are up and running – if they have held only two meetings each at this point, there cannot be very much to share, and I would suggest that they be left to run as initially intended and report to the Conference on Disarmament when their full slate of meetings is concluded. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the delegate of Canada. I disagree with him slightly, in that I found yesterday's meeting to be very useful, and the coordinators who participated presented many valuable views. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Ms. Kuznetsova (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, we thank you for the update on your active efforts to secure agreement on a programme of work. At the previous plenary meeting, we called upon delegations to avoid turning the Conference on Disarmament into a forum for political squabbling on issues that are not on its agenda, but we are compelled to make some remarks in response to the statements of certain delegations.

Russia has consistently opposed the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances. Our country has shown its commitment to the goals and

objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention by completing a national programme to eliminate its stockpiles of chemical weapons in 2017, three years ahead of schedule.

We have always supported impartial and independent investigations of chemical weapons incidents. Russia played a leading role in the formation of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in Syria, which was established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2235 (2015). In 2016, we voted to extend its mandate pursuant to Security Council resolution 2319 (2016).

Nevertheless, in the course of the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, fundamental flaws became apparent, which raised concern about its findings. All this brought to the fore the question of reforming the Joint Investigative Mechanism. But the joint Bolivian-Russian-Chinese proposal in the Security Council to extend the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and align its work with the high standards of the Chemical Weapons Convention was blocked by those of our Western partners who are permanent members of the Security Council. They wanted to leave the Joint Investigative Mechanism unchanged so that they could keep using it for their own purposes. They thus bear full responsibility for the fact that it no longer exists.

They are now attempting to achieve in OPCW what they failed to achieve in New York. We are talking about inappropriately endowing OPCW with an attributive mechanism. We see this as a clear attempt to distort the mandate of OPCW and undermine the legal basis on which it is founded. We strongly disagree with these destructive ambitions. When it comes to the States Members of the United Nations, the Security Council is the only international organ, other than international courts, that can identify perpetrators and take measures against them.

We invite our partners to refrain from putting forward destructive initiatives and instead to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of OPCW field missions as a matter of urgency. In particular, reform of the OPCW fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic is long overdue. This structure must finally begin to operate in accordance with the high standards of OPCW, and it must be accountable to the OPCW governing bodies for all its activities.

The decision to convene a Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the idea of endowing OPCW with an attributive mechanism have nothing to do with chemical disarmament and have narrow political objectives. We wish to give prior warning of the risk of this undertaking. According to the Chemical Weapons Convention, decisions at the Conference of the States Parties are taken by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting at its plenary meetings. Abstentions are not counted. Their opinion is of no consequence. Thus, a momentous decision on the future of OPCW, one that repurposes and transforms it from a purely technical body into a political structure that delivers damning verdicts on individual States and their leaders, can, effectively, be taken in accordance with the will of a minority of States Parties.

Once again, dear colleagues, I would like to emphasize our conviction that all work in the Conference on Disarmament should all be conducted in accordance with its adopted rules of procedure and decisions.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation, and I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Atta (Egypt): Thank you, Ambassador. First of all, I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of my delegation's full support. Mr. President, we are compelled to take the floor to respond to some of the falsifications that we have heard just now in relation to the interpretation of the decision contained in document CD/2119 and, since our delegation was heavily involved in the drafting of this decision, I have to elaborate on the following points.

We categorically disagree with the views expressed just now by the Ambassador of Switzerland, the colleague from Canada and our colleague from the Netherlands, and I must say so for the record. My delegation was clear during the negotiations through which we adopted this decision that there should be an explicit reference to the role of the President of the Conference in drafting the programme of work, and I would like to read here the

language that was actually taken from one of the statements delivered by Egypt during the discussions or the negotiations on this draft decision: "Without prejudice to the rules of procedure of the Conference in the responsibilities entrusted to the President under the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament, in particular rule 29 for drawing up the programme of work of the Conference."

As for the utterly unfounded interpretation of operative paragraph 2 of the decision, I would like to remind colleagues here that the appointment of coordinators came through another decision, the decision contained in document CD/2126, and I cannot find any plausible link between the appointment of the coordinators and the responsibilities entrusted to the President. I think this view is shared not only by Egypt but also by the Group of 21, and that view was explicitly transmitted through our coordinator to the President of the Conference, Ambassador Dallafior of Switzerland, when we noticed in one of the summaries circulated on the presidential consultations that there was a sort of detachment of the work of the subsidiary bodies from the responsibilities entrusted to the President. We wanted to make this clear, and that is why there was a Group position that was conveyed to the President at the time.

A question to be asked to the delegations that claim that there is no role for the President in relation to the work of the subsidiary bodies: how can the President fulfil his mandate to put together a programme of work if he is not informed by the coordinators about the progress of their work? I would really like to ask colleagues here who share the point of view that was mentioned just now to provide us with a clear answer to this question. Mr. President, we feel as well that there is somehow a deliberate tendency to undermine the work of the subsidiary bodies and we are keen not to see this happen during the 2018 session. I would like to remind colleagues here that expectations for the work of the subsidiary bodies are high. We urge all to take this into account. I thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement, and I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Makarowski (Sweden): Thank you, Ambassador. As former holders of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in the current session, we feel obliged to give our view of the role of the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies and the role of the presidency. Let me at the outset agree with our Egyptian colleague on the attempts to undermine the role of the subsidiary bodies. Those should be avoided, and the subsidiary bodies should be allowed to carry out the work they were mandated to.

Regrettably, that was the only point in the statement of our Egyptian colleague with which I can agree. As to the mandate of the subsidiary bodies, we have the same interpretation of the decision contained in document CD/2119 as that expressed by the Swiss Ambassador. We fully share that interpretation, and that indeed was the interpretation that we followed during our presidency in discussion with the future coordinators. We did not foresee any role for our own presidency, had the subsidiary bodies been established and started working under our presidency. We did not see that role for any other presidency until the point when the subsidiary bodies are to report to the Conference through the presidency in August. We fully respect rule 29 and the role of the President in trying to establish the programme of work. We all know that, had we been able to adopt the programme of work, we would probably not have subsidiary bodies – we would be doing something else. The subsidiary bodies are up and running and should continue their work. It is up to the coordinators, as mandated according to the decisions contained in documents CD/2119 and CD/2126, to coordinate the work of the subsidiary bodies and report on the results in August. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Sweden. I am seeing a kind of distortion, not only of the decision contained in document CD/2119, but even of the Conference's rules of procedure. I am sure that it would have been easier for the President to sit back and relax, rather than making a serious attempt to achieve consensus on a programme of work. The rules of procedure and the decision contained in document CD/2119 do not exonerate the President from carrying out that task; in fact, they emphasize that the President has a responsibility in that regard. Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I would like to echo the question raised by the representative of Egypt: how can

the President work seriously to identify common ground on which a programme of work could be based if he is unable to obtain a complete overview of the work done by the subsidiary bodies thus far? I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Han Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, my delegation commends you for your efforts to ensure the adoption of a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament and appreciates your explanation of the capacity of the President of the Conference.

I would like to join the previous speakers, including those representing Pakistan, Venezuela, Cuba, Iran and others, in explaining the rules and procedures of the presidency of the Conference. Many speakers clearly explained what role should be played by the President, so there is no need to explain it again – I support what previous speakers have said. Mr. President, you can rest assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation in discharging your role. I am deeply sorry and very surprised to hear that two coordinators of subsidiary bodies have refused to hold consultations with the President. Such refusal is an expression of a failure to honour the relevant resolution adopted by consensus in this chamber and runs counter to the rules of procedure. In this respect, I again join several countries in expressing my serious concern over the attempts to politicize this august body and undermine the role of the President. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and your support for the work of this presidency. I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Broilo (Poland): Thank you Mr. President. Let me stress first of all that Poland very much regrets that the mandate of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has not been renewed. The Mechanism was a fully legitimate body instrumental in finding evidence of the use of chemical weapons. Let me provide you now with a very important quotation:

Since 2014, the fact-finding mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has examined 83 incidents involving the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria. Investigators have said chemical weapons were used or were more than likely to have been used in 14 cases so far. Each use is a crime under international law, and their widespread use may also constitute a crime against humanity. The Security Council has failed to meet its responsibility to ensure accountability for these attacks, and I am working with the members of the Security Council to build new leadership and unity to restore shared ownership and respect for the global ban on chemical weapons. This must include the creation of a new and impartial mechanism to identify those who use them. We cannot allow continued impunity in Syria or elsewhere, and I will also support efforts to strengthen the Chemical Weapons Convention and its institutional capacity to ensure the full implementation of this landmark disarmament treaty. We will never accept the possession or use of chemical weapons.

That was part of the statement delivered by Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, here in Geneva, on 24 May 2018, and we fully subscribe to those words. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of China. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate China's principles and position with regard to the use of chemical weapons. China opposes the use of chemical weapons by any State or non-State entity at any time and in any place. We believe that any allegations in this connection must be based on reliable facts, not hearsay, and that any conclusions must be based on objective and impartial investigations. We believe that holding a Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention at this stage would be unnecessary, especially considering that a meeting of the States Parties to the Convention itself is to be held before the end of the year.

We share the concerns expressed by our Russian colleague just now with regard to making significant changes to the nature of the Convention and the mandates of its mechanisms. We call on all countries to think carefully about such an issue, and to avoid politicizing any problems.

On the issue of rules of procedure, I would like to emphasize that the Conference is part of the rule-based international order, so due process is very important. Failing to meet the requirements of due process in any work we do will render the results of such work meaningless and deprive them of legitimacy.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of China for his statement and I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, who has asked to speak again.

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I have requested the floor to respond to or comment on some of the statements that were delivered with respect to a reinterpretation of the decision contained in document CD/2119.

Mr. President, we agree completely with what was stated by the delegate of Egypt. I also want to place on record that we completely and wholeheartedly reject the self-serving reinterpretation of a crystal-clear decision adopted by the Conference on Disarmament. We are all entitled to our political views, but we cannot twist and bend words of the decision to suit our political positions. While my delegation completely respects the political positions and views expressed by other delegations, however relevant or irrelevant they are to the Conference's work, we cannot endorse such a significant reinterpretation of a decision adopted by the Conference. As for the clear interpretation of my delegation, the subsidiary bodies have to be chaired by coordinators appointed by the Conference under the guidance of the President, and there are no two opinions about it. With all due respect to the views expressed by the representatives of Switzerland and Sweden, which, during their presidencies of the Conference, did a marvellous job of bringing us to the appointment of coordinators, the decision contained in document CD/2119 was adopted under the presidency of Sri Lanka, not under the presidency of Sweden or Switzerland. I wish Ambassador Aryasinha were here to give us the background on how those words were included – if any representative in the room could have had an authoritative interpretation of that particular clause, it would obviously have been Ambassador Aryasinha, the former Ambassador of Sri Lanka.

It is also ironic, Mr. President, that countries that speak about rule of law are themselves not fulfilling their obligations or responsibilities under a decision adopted by the Conference. This also must not be let go. My delegation is weighing its options for dealing with this situation, which we see as a manifest violation of a Conference decision. We do not as yet have a clear approach – we will continue our very active, constructive and positive participation in the subsidiary bodies in the hope of contributing to advancing the substantive issues of the Conference and developing commonalities and some concrete outcomes in terms of a programme of work or consensus outcomes that can help us make progress in the Conference. But at the same time, we are also considering our options on how to deal with this situation, how we can reflect this unfortunate fact in the reports of the subsidiary bodies and in the reports of the Conference, for example. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement, and I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Thank you, Mr. President. My original intention was simply to give you information on this afternoon's meeting of subsidiary body 3. Before getting into that particular issue, I would like to make a couple of remarks with respect to the context in which the decision contained in document CD/2119 and the follow-up decision contained in document CD/2126 were taken. I recall that it was a group of ambassadors representing altogether six countries, with the cooperation of the secretariat, the support of the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and then the participation of all members of the Conference, that were responsible for achieving these two consensus decisions. One aspect of an evolving positive trend in my view was the fact that, from the beginning, there was coordination among the six Presidents of the

Conference for 2018 and that this occurred on more than one occasion. Because the negotiators of the decision wanted it not to fall apart in mid-course during the year, it was important to have all presidencies on board. From the beginning, therefore, no questions were asked about the status or the alphabetical rotation of the different Presidents prescribed by the rules of procedure.

I therefore think it is important to uphold the structure of this body; we are already facing an uphill battle to get the Conference back into substantive work. This requires the flexibility of all because clearly some have the position that it is the role of the President to work towards a formal programme of work with negotiating mandates – that is what the rules say. So, of course, to achieve something that is a bit less than that required flexibility and creative solutions and the work of all six Presidents for 2018 in relative harmony. It is thus a bit upsetting that, at this point in time, in mid-course, while we are trying to get the subsidiary bodies to make progress on difficult substantive matters, we are now getting bogged down in an issue that really should not be raised. I recall that in 2017 we had a situation in which one of the Presidents took the decision not to convene a formal plenary of the Conference and that there was harsh criticism from some with respect to that particular action, which was regarded as not following the perceived wisdom and the practice in this body of always having meetings convened.

The Conference works under a very formal and rigid procedural basis, and if we break with strict respect for the rules in this way, I think it really does raise the question of how will we function henceforth – because anyone would then be able to question any aspect of the rules. The fact that the decisions were taken, and whether or not they mention a role for the President is not especially relevant, because the decisions were adopted under the responsibility of the respective Presidents, and there is no questioning that the Presidents have authority over the Conference as a whole; the bodies, of course, are subsidiary to the Conference, so in a certain respect they are subsidiary to the presidency of the Conference as well. They are mostly informal, unless the Conference decides otherwise, so they hold informal sessions and briefings and consultations with the President. The least that can be expected is for the coordinators to accept and to attend, whatever their particular positions on certain issues may be in other forums. Respecting the peculiarities and specific mandates and the agenda items of each forum is an important first step if we wish to move on from the impasse of more than 20 years that has raised questions about the efficacy of this body. We are trying to overcome this situation, and I would make an appeal for all of us to do our best to focus on substantive work. That is what my delegation will try to do.

With respect to subsidiary body 3 – not that I understand there to be an obligation on my part to keep the plenary of the Conference informed of everything that we are doing – I would like to alert you, because for this afternoon's session – one of three this week, which is quite a few – I have not received any indication that delegations might wish to make technical or expert presentations on particular aspects or dimensions of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Therefore, to continue a dynamic of progress, I have prepared a first set of comments from the coordinator on everything that has been said up until now, so I will read it out. It is almost five pages long. It is entirely informal, and the only intention is to create interaction with members of the body. I have thus made an effort to produce a kind of narrative that picks up on all elements that I found interesting from each of the 18 or 19 statements made by delegations that were handed to me in writing. I will read and distribute what I have prepared and then encourage delegations to make their comments on my comments, and we will continue with the dialogue, hopefully towards an outcome useful for and acceptable to all. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota. I echo your appeal to focus on our work on the substantive items on the agenda. I wish you every success in your meetings this week. The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. Heidari (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, having listened very carefully to the innovative interpretations of the decision that was made under the first President and the two subsequent decisions on the appointment of coordinators, I am very surprised as, as I have said, they go against the rules of procedure and the role of the President, as well as the content and intention with which the decision was adopted.

Therefore, my delegation, like those of Egypt and Pakistan, wants its reservation to the recent fallacious interpretation of the rules of procedure to go on record. No matter which country holds the presidency, following the practice of rotation in alphabetical order, the role of the President is very clear. The working group on the way ahead was established in 2017 – and I wonder if I may ask the working group's Chair, the Ambassador of Myanmar, whether he asked the subgroups' facilitators to consult with him? And any time that the Chair of the working group wished to speak in the Conference plenary, he had the freedom to do so. Therefore, I sincerely thank the coordinator of the subsidiary body working on prevention of an arms race in outer space, the Ambassador of Brazil, for his insightful and informative explanation of what he is doing in this forum, the formal plenary. I regret that, unfortunately, two of the coordinators declined and that they have resorted to a pretext and a very false interpretation of the rules of procedure. It should be noted that this kind of behaviour and false interpretation of the rules of procedure sets a very bad precedent.

Having been the victim of chemical weapons, Iran condemns any use of chemical weapons in any circumstances by anyone, anywhere, at any time. On the case that is under the purview of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), we believe that, as we have stated before, the Chemical Weapons Convention is a comprehensive treaty with its own provisions and all its rules. Therefore, we believe that if the treaty is going to be fully implemented, we should avoid any politicization of the rules; otherwise, this important treaty becomes a collection of pale provisions on the basis of selective respect for its rules of procedure. Therefore, OPCW is empowered to investigate any use of chemical weapons, until the provisions of the Convention are fully implemented by all members, and the work of OPCW is not politicized. Thank you very much.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement, and I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, who has asked to speak again.

Mr. Pilz (Germany): Thank you, Mr. President. I would at the outset like to state that we fully respect the opinions expressed by some distinguished delegations here on the validity of the decisions contained in documents CD/2119 and CD/2126 as well as the respective connection to the rules of procedure. To state that some delegations have interpreted the mandate or the rules of procedure falsely amounts, I think, to a prejudgment, because the only thing we can state here for sure is that there are diverging views on the interpretation of the decisions contained in documents CD/2119 and CD/2126 as well as the rules of procedure, views that underline the divisions that also exist here on substantive issues in the Conference on Disarmament. For that reason, at the beginning of the year, we tried to put forward a solution to get this body back to work, as was also explained by my colleague from Brazil. In that group of selected Ambassadors, we were guided by the intention to overcome the divisions, and the principle that was to be applied to overcome those divisions was to do substantive work in the subsidiary bodies. For the time being, therefore, I think it is premature to make a judgment on the possible impact of the outcome of the discussions on a programme of work, also due to the fact that not all of the subsidiary bodies have taken up their work yet. It is premature to interfere with the process of the subsidiary bodies at this stage, because in our subsidiary body we have simply concluded preliminary discussions; we are set to enter a substantive phase next week, and the same situation applies to other subsidiary bodies. Still others have not taken up their work yet due to the timetable set out in the decision contained in document CD/2126.

So, at the moment, we consider that any effort to come to a preliminary conclusion on the outcome of the work of the subsidiary bodies would not contribute effectively to the establishment of a programme of work. Thank you.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Germany. Does anyone else wish to take the floor? As there are no further speakers, I would like to take the floor in my national capacity to respond to some of the accusations and allegations made during the meeting.

Firstly, it is regrettable that we are continuing to see an unprecedented trend towards the politicization and polarization of the Conference's work. At a time when we should all be working constructively and effectively to break the deadlock that the Conference is

facing, we are instead continuing to witness attempts to raise issues that fall outside its mandate and role. These attempts are driven by obvious political motivations, the aims of which are well known. I agree with those colleagues who have said that such topics could be addressed more effectively if they were discussed in the technical bodies of the relevant conventions.

Some delegations have made allegations in order to justify repeating their false accusations regarding the use of chemical weapons in Syria, claiming that, as the Conference on Disarmament had negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention, they had an obligation to express their concern about the alleged use of chemical weapons. However, those States are ignoring the fact that there are other technical bodies responsible for monitoring and implementing these conventions. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is clearly the best place in which to discuss such allegations, as it possesses the necessary legal and technical expertise. In addition, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the best place in which to discuss allegations relating to the safeguards regime under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Some colleagues also raised the issue of the commitment of Syria to implementing a comprehensive safeguards regime, alleging that Syria had not cooperated sufficiently to clarify the nature of the site targeted in an Israeli attack against a military installation in Deir al-Zor. Yet, such allegations are at odds with the facts. Those States know full well that the conclusion reached by IAEA regarding the Deir al-Zor site, founded as it was on supposition and limited evidence, did not enjoy consensus among member States. Those States are also well aware who, for political reasons, hindered the implementation of the plan of action agreed on and signed with IAEA in October 2011 with the aim of resolving all outstanding issues concerning the site. Given that Israel has recently accepted responsibility for shelling the Deir al-Zor site, the States making these allegations should, first and foremost, condemn the Israeli aggression and oblige Israel to cooperate with IAEA to confirm the source of the uranium contamination at the site. I think you will agree with me that the best place for discussing such details is IAEA, not this chamber.

With regard to the repeated accusations concerning the use of chemical weapons in Syria, I would like to begin by reaffirming that the Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly and openly condemned the use of chemical weapons in any place, at any time and under any circumstances, and has confirmed that it does not possess any chemical weapons. Unfortunately, some parties are continuing to use such claims to justify military attacks in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic in order – so they claim – to destroy Syrian chemical capabilities and deter the future use of chemical weapons. These States know full well that Syria has not had a chemical weapons arsenal since abandoning its chemical programme in 2013. In fact, those States helped destroy the chemical materials that had been removed from Syrian territory for disposal under the supervision of OPCW. Furthermore, the claim that Syria has not fulfilled its commitments to dismantle its chemical arsenal was refuted by the head of the OPCW–United Nations Joint Mission in her statement at the meeting of the Security Council held on 23 June 2014.

With regard to the remarks concerning the Syrian declaration and the questions concerning certain aspects thereof, I would like to point out that Syria has continued to respond effectively to all questions and requests for clarification from OPCW. Syria has also repeatedly assured the Organisation of its readiness to cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat to finalize the declaration. On 17 May 2018, Syria submitted its fifty-fourth activity report on the destruction of its chemical weapons and chemical weapon production facilities. It should also be pointed out that the Technical Secretariat of OPCW has verified the destruction of 25 of the 27 chemical weapon production facilities in Syria. We are waiting for the administrative formalities required by the Organisation to be completed before we can start to destroy the remaining two facilities. With regard to the declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic concerning the activities of certain laboratories, it is worth remembering that the tripartite military attack against the Scientific Research Centre destroyed the Institute 6000, which was the subject of discussions between Syria and the Technical Secretariat.

The Syrian Arab Republic has confirmed, time and again, that it no longer possesses chemical weapons of any kind. It has closed down and destroyed all its chemical weapons

production facilities. No credit can be given to the false allegations that, bereft of reason or evidence, continue to be promoted in this chamber and elsewhere. What is worse, some States have continued to spread allegations of chemical weapons use without awaiting the results of investigations, thereby demonstrating their disrespect for the United Nations, the Security Council and the relevant technical organizations. The latest tripartite aggression carried out against Syria using the incident in Duma as a pretext is a clear example of such behaviour, which flouts all agreed norms. The attack was launched just as the OPCW team of investigators was en route to Syria to inquire into the allegations concerning the incident. The team had come in response to a request made by Syria to OPCW on 10 April 2018, to investigate the alleged incident in Duma. Syria has cooperated fully and has facilitated the work of the investigation teams, which conducted five visits: three to sites requested by the Commission, including a hospital, and two to sites requested by the Syrian Arab Republic, both of which were warehouses affiliated with terrorist groups. The warehouses, which had been found to contain toxic chemical substances, had been discovered during the combing operations conducted by the armed forces after liberating the city of Douma from the terrorists. Again, I believe that the most suitable place for discussing such issues is OPCW, not this chamber.

With regard to the request to convene a special meeting of the States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, it is clear that States that have made unfounded allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria are still attempting to exploit OPCW and the Convention to create a mechanism that serves their own ends. The fact is that these States have repeatedly demonstrated their lack of interest, either in the conduct of professional and objective investigations into cases of chemical weapons use in Syria or in ending provocations involving the use of toxic chemicals by terrorist groups and their affiliated non-governmental organizations, such as the White Helmets. I believe that the position adopted by those States in this chamber, opposing the initiative to combat chemical and biological terrorism, is the best example of their unwillingness to take measures to verify all aspects of allegations regarding the use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere. They insist on dictating the working methods of fact-finding missions, such as by pressing them to conduct their activities remotely, without ever visiting the sites of the alleged incidents. That was one of the key failings of the investigative mechanisms, including the OPCW–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, referred to by the representatives of certain member States. As a result, the Russian Federation found itself obliged to raise before the Security Council the need to improve the working methods of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and to bring them into line with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. However, the States that are continuing to spread these accusations attempted to suppress the mechanism by voting against a draft resolution on the issue in the Council.

Lastly, with regard to the extended quotation from alleged witnesses read out by one speaker today, forgive me, but we are hardly surprised that those States are choosing to ignore the briefing that was held at the headquarters of OPCW in The Hague on 26 April 2018 to hear the testimonies of witnesses who had appeared in one of the videos issued by the White Helmets concerning the alleged use of chemical weapons in Duma. In fact, during the briefing, those witnesses refuted the allegations. I believe that OPCW and this Conference have already suffered enough from attempts to politicize their work by States that are continuing to impose their own political agendas and use these purely technical forums to serve their political objectives. Those who speak about the role and mandate of the Conference must not forget that its primary responsibility and core mandate is to serve as a technical forum for negotiations on multilateral legal instruments, not a platform for making unfounded accusations.

I hope that these clarifications are enough to stop the ongoing campaigns of incitement against Syria and to allow the Conference to focus once again on its work, rather than continuing to be held hostage to the political agendas of certain States.

I shall now resume my role as President of the Conference. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this time? It would appear not. Does the Secretariat wish to make a statement about this afternoon's meeting following Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota's remarks on the same subject? The floor is yours.

Mr. Kalbusch (Secretary of the Conference on Disarmament): Thank you, Mr. President. I will not make a statement about the meeting. The secretariat would like to remind all delegations that this afternoon, subsidiary body 3 will continue its work at 3 p.m. here in the Council Chamber under the coordination of Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota of Brazil. Subsidiary body 3 will also meet tomorrow afternoon – Wednesday – at 3 p.m. and on Thursday morning and afternoon – that is, at 10 a.m. on Thursday morning and at 3 p.m. on Thursday afternoon. I would also like to take the opportunity to remind you that next week, starting on Monday, 11 June 2018, at 3 p.m., subsidiary body 4 will be meeting in the Council Chamber for four afternoons in a row – that is, at 3 p.m. on 11, 12, 13 and 14 June – under the coordination of Ambassador Biontino of Germany. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): That brings us to the end of our business for today. Our next meeting will take place in the Council Chamber at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 12 June 2018.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.