



# General Assembly

*Official Records*

## Disarmament Commission

**376**<sup>th</sup> meetingFriday, 28 February 2020, 11 a.m.  
New York

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*Acting Chair:* Mr. Markram

*The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.*

### **Announcement of precautionary measures against the coronavirus outbreak**

**The Acting Chair:** I have a public safety announcement to make before we actually get on with our proceedings today. As members will be aware, the World Health Organization has declared the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak as a public-health emergency of international concern. While the emphasis of this decision is on global measures to control the outbreak, individuals can contribute by following the advice to “think global and act local”. I urge all participants to follow the guidance provided by the Secretariat, which includes strict instructions not to attend a meeting if they are unwell or have a fever, cough or respiratory symptoms; to contact the Medical Service here in Headquarters by telephone if they are unwell and have been to an at-risk location for coronavirus in the past 14 days; and to undertake regular preventive measures such as cough etiquette and regular hand-washing. These measures are for participants’ safety and to safeguard the well-being of all of us.

### **Draft provisional agenda for the 2020 organizational session of the Disarmament Commission (A/CN.10/L.83)**

**The Acting Chair:** As in past years, the Commission is convened today for a brief session to deal with its organizational matters, including the election of the Chair and other members of the Bureau for 2020. As the Commission is aware, the organizational meeting held

on 18 February (see A/CN.10/PV.376) was suspended for 10 days. The Commission is convened today for a brief resumed meeting to deal with its organizational matters, including the election of the Chair and other members of the Bureau for 2020.

The Secretariat has received the following notification from the Group of Asia-Pacific States: the candidatures of Mr. Ariel Rodelas Penaranda, Minister at the Permanent Mission of the Philippines, and Mr. Mohammad Ali Jardali, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Lebanon, have been endorsed as Vice-Chairs from the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Penaranda and Mr. Jardali as Vice-Chairs of the Commission.

I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I note the positive spirit in which you, Mr. Markram, have begun our session, as if nothing had occurred, as if everything were well. I would be delighted to share your attitude but, unfortunately, I cannot, because, before we move to the issues that we are here to discuss, we need to address the more important situation, one that still does not allow our country to participate fully in the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, including its organizational session.

As you mentioned, Sir, the session was suspended for 10 days, during which our efforts continued. The

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Committee on Relations with the Host Country met, and we spoke at that meeting. I will now ask my assistant to distribute the text of the statement we made at that meeting. I would like to suggest that it would be logical to give the floor to the Chair of that Committee, Mr. Mavroyiannis, so that he may briefly inform us of what happened, after which I ask you, Sir, to give the floor to me again.

**The Acting Chair:** I give the floor to the representative of Cyprus in his capacity as Chair of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

**Mr. Mavroyiannis** (Cyprus), Chair of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country: I consider it somehow my moral duty, since I was behind the proposal to limit the suspension to 10 days, to report back to you, Sir, for what it is worth, on the developments, or lack thereof.

As you are aware, on Tuesday I convened, at the urgent request of the Russian Federation, a meeting of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country. The Committee was informed, among other matters, about delays in the issuance of visas to members of the delegation of the Russian Federation to the Disarmament Commission, including the Head of the delegation. The United Nations Legal Counsel attended the meeting and informed the Committee that he and the Secretary-General had been engaging with the host country authorities about visa delays and travel restrictions and that he would inform the Secretary-General of the points raised during the meeting.

I understand that the Secretary-General has been fully briefed and that he has met with the Permanent Representative of the United States regarding this matter. I understand that he may also have other high-level meetings in the coming days.

**The Acting Chair:** I thank the representative of Cyprus for that report on the proceedings of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of Cyprus for informing us of the outcomes of the meeting of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

We have heard that the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs promised to inform the Secretary-General of the situation so that urgent measures could be taken to address it. Everyone, including the members of

the Secretariat, recognizes that this situation is highly unusual and needs to be addressed.

We must also state that following the meeting of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, the only conclusion we can draw is that the host country is once again refusing the Russian delegation the right to participate at the appropriate expert level in the substantive discussions of the Disarmament Commission. We believe that this is a blatant violation of the United States' obligations. We would have been ready to review our position had the representative of the United States given some kind of guarantee to the Committee that a visa would be issued to Mr. Konstantin Vorontsov, the head of our delegation, to allow his participation in the substantive segment of the Disarmament Commission. But that did not happen.

I would like to repeat that, as I said 10 days ago, if the representative of the United States would now make such a statement through the microphone, that would for me be sufficient justification to ask my capital to change our approach to the organizational session of the Commission. As of this moment, I have no such justification. I must therefore ask my colleagues here to postpone this organizational session of the Disarmament Commission for a reasonable and finite period, as deemed appropriate by member States, so as to provide the United States the opportunity to fulfil its obligations, as enshrined in section 11 of the Headquarters Agreement of 1947 and approved by the General Assembly in resolution 74/195.

I would like to highlight that this obstacle to the work of our Commission was not created by my delegation. We are in fact talking about an obstacle that has been created by the United States for my delegation. Such an obstacle could be created for any other delegation present in this room. This is not a bilateral issue; this is a matter that pertains to all of us, so I would like us to take this extremely seriously.

I would also like to hear, if possible, from the representative of the United States, which could perhaps help us have a more positive outlook when we leave this room.

**Mr. Horne** (Australia): I thank you, Sir, for your comments on the global situation with regard to coronavirus at the outset.

I was listening with great interest, and I thank the representative of Cyprus for the update from the

Committee on Relations with the Host Country. I heard the comments by the representative of the Russian Federation and, again, we are completely sympathetic to the circumstances in which the Russian Federation and its delegation find themselves. But the key point in that intervention for me was the assertion that the Russian Federation is not being an impediment to progress in this body.

I think it is quite clear that there was a clear mandate in the First Committee and the General Assembly that the Disarmament Commission should convene and that we should at least make an effort to meet. I believe that there is a distinction between the matter before the Committee on Relations with the Host Country and the role of the Disarmament Commission. Even by the most generous assessment of the role Disarmament Commission could play in any solution, I think it requires us to have a Chair and a Bureau to help broker any discussion that might be happening between the United States and the Russian Federation to try and move us forward.

Therefore, having heard the comments, I do not expect anyone to be in a position to offer any sort of assurance to anyone on the issuance of visas because I think that is well and truly outside what we are doing here.

At this stage, I object to the Russian proposal to suspend. I am not clear if that was a proposal under rule 118 of the rules of procedure. The last time we met, it was a vague request for the goodwill of the room, and we all acceded to that request in the interests of trying to find a way to move forward. Unless the Russian Federation is going to make a specific request in line with the rules of procedure, at this point Australia is going to object to an indefinite postponement, or whatever the formulation was.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I do not want to go into the details of the whole situation. The representative of Australia said that no proposal was made, but I did make a proposal that the representative of the United States of America take the floor to explain his Government's position. We would like to thank our Australian colleague: we, too, would certainly like to move on to the substantive work of the Commission. But we cannot do so, and I would ask everyone to respect our position.

For objective reasons, we cannot move forward to discuss substantive issues, and this is a very serious point.

We cannot do this not because we are not competent, but because the head of our delegation has not been granted a visa. This has a direct impact on the interests of everyone in the room, and we are absolutely convinced that this issue needs to be resolved before we move to discuss the organizational, let alone the substantive, issues before the Disarmament Commission.

I therefore propose that we suspend this session for a reasonable period of time. Perhaps we need to give our colleague from the United States a little more time. The Secretary-General promised to get involved in this matter directly, and we need to respect his decision. He is very concerned by this situation. Therefore, perhaps we could suspend the organizational session until immediately prior to the substantive session in April.

First of all, this would allow us to save resources, as mentioned by Mr. Markram at the previous meeting (see A/CN.10/74/PV.376). But once again I would ask the Acting Chair to give the floor to my colleague from the United States. I know that the Americans are modest, but their silence is not well received by the rest of us in the room.

**The Acting Chair:** We have heard two proposals. One of the proposals does not carry support, so we are back to the situation of not having at least a clarification from the Russian Federation on postponing this organizational meeting to a later date prior to the meeting that we have already been mandated to proceed with on 6 April. Is there anyone who wishes to take the floor on the proposal from the Russian Federation?

**Mr. Lee** (United States of America): I really appreciate the Acting Chair having convened today's meeting and proceeding as he has been doing.

We regret that Russia once again seeks to hold the United Nations Disarmament Commission's substantive work hostage. This interruption has lasted for more than a year now. The time has come to move forward with the Commission's work.

We regret that Russia has forced a departure from the Commission's long-standing tradition of consensus-based decision-making, giving us no choice but to call for a vote on the matter before us right now, whereby, per General Assembly rule 118, it sounds like the Russian Federation is calling for a postponement of this meeting, which should therefore be taken to a vote. Accordingly, we would like to object to its motion and

call for a procedural vote on the matter of whether to postpone this meeting or not.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I apologize, but I do not quite understand what we are called upon to vote for by the United States. Much has been said in addition to what was necessary to hear. We were expecting hear certain other things. Again, what are we being called to vote on? I would ask for clarification on that from the representative of the United States.

**The Acting Chair**: I do not like giving the floor to people who do not ask for it, but in the interest of having it be clear to everyone in the room what we are actually being asked to do, I would like the representative of the United States to clarify what he asking the Commission to vote upon.

**Mr. Lee** (United States of America): We are objecting to the motion put forward to postpone the meeting. Per rule 118, we would like to call a procedural vote on the matter.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We did not propose any motion. Perhaps that was a misunderstanding. We did not refer to any rule of procedure, so there is no vote being called for. We call for the goodwill of the people in the conference room. Once again, we would say that we cannot hold the organizational session of the Disarmament Commission because we cannot fully participate, as the head of our delegation has not received a visa. Perhaps there is some manipulation going on, but this issue is a lot more serious than how the United States is trying to portray it.

**The Acting Chair**: I would say to the delegations that I am now in their hands. We have now had a proposal from the Russian Federation. We have had a counter-clarification from the United States, where we have not called upon any of the rules of procedure. Is there anyone who wishes to take the floor to either clarify the situation further or advise me on how the delegations would like to proceed?

**Mr. Horne** (Australia): I apologize for taking the floor again. In our following of what has been happening, there was a proposal made by the Russian Federation that was not consistent with the rules of procedure. We have objected to an adjournment at this point. There is nothing beyond a desire to trade on the goodwill of the Commission from the Russian Federation. We

are happy to have a discussion around this topic, but our central point is that if we are going to make any progress on any of the issues that are blocking us, we need to have a Chair and a Bureau. There is no one in a position to try and broker some sort of arrangement. In the absence of that, it runs completely contrary to the outcome of the votes in the General Assembly and the First Committee.

What we have heard from the representative of the United States is that his delegation's interpretation of the Russian request is that it was a request made consistent with rule 118. I think that there is a pretty clear case that what the Russian Federation is proposing is consistent with rule 118. That would mean that we are moving towards a vote because there are objections to the proposal. Otherwise, if the Russian Federation is not actually making a request consistent with the rules of procedure, I see absolutely no impediment to moving towards the immediate election of the Chair and the Bureau. We are where we are, with no proposal on the table consistent with the rules of procedure. We are in the hands of the member States, but that is our understanding of what is happening in the moment.

**Mr. Hallak** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): In the past, it was the custom and practice within the Disarmament Commission not to have voting. No case in which voting was required had ever arisen, so we saw no need to support it, although the need almost arose in the case of the adoption of a final document, where a delegation — and everyone knows which delegation that was — refused to adopt a final document.

As Mr. Markram knows from his long-standing experience in these matters, in past years — in 2009, as I recall — a great deal of time was needed for the Commission to adopt an agenda, but there was never any recourse to voting. If we were to start using a voting procedure within the Disarmament Commission, we would be going down a path that many States — ours, first and foremost — do not wish to take. If voting were instituted in the Commission, there would be many repercussions on the Commission's work. We therefore do not support voting in the Commission, both because it is unprecedented and because it would have a negative impact on the work of the Commission.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to offer a slight correction, which

is directed to my colleagues from the United States and Australia.

There is no consensus in this room. It is not clear whether there is any agreement on the proposal to postpone the session, but there is no consensus on moving forward — on business as usual, holding the organizational meeting of the Commission — either. There is a big difference between the two.

I would also, like my colleague from Syria, refer to the years of practice of the consensus rule on procedural issues in the Commission. I would like also to object to continuing the work of the organizational session in such circumstances. The rule of consensus has never been broken by the Commission, and so I propose that we not do so now.

Also, given that we do not have an elected Chair at the moment and that you, Sir, are carrying out this role on an interim basis, I suggest that we postpone the start of the session for a reasonable amount of time so as to give our American colleagues time to fulfil their obligations as the host country of the United Nations. There is no other way of preserving the consensus nature of the work of the Commission.

**Mr. Hamzah** (Malaysia): I wish to express my gratitude for the convening of this resumed organizational session. I thank also the representative of Cyprus for the update on the recent meeting of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

I am following closely the discussion in the room and the comments made by colleagues. I think that it is important for all of us to know where we are and where we are heading, because otherwise we will not be heading in the right direction. My understanding, as I wrote on this piece of paper, is that we are resuming the session from the meeting we held on 18 February to prepare for the substantive session, which will take place from 6 to 24 April.

I think that we all know that there is an urgent need for a session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) to take place now because of the issues and threats that we are facing in the realm of international peace and security. I know that we have not touched on the substantive part of the UNDC, but I wish to recall that the Commission is the specialized deliberative subsidiary body of the General Assembly and a platform that allows Member States to sit together, hold discussions and exchange views among

countries that have various positions on the political spectrum. We have nuclear-weapon States, nuclear-possessor States and non-nuclear-weapon States in this room, which should be utilized to hold such a discourse among all of us. But what we have experienced so far is that it seems to be difficult to reach that stage of open discourse and discussion.

Following the discussion that we are having, there is a possibility we might not be able to proceed with the organizational session today. The second possibility is that we will proceed with it at the risk of destroying the consensual basis of the UNDC. My delegation has — as have, I think, many other delegations in this room — been guided by the outcome of the first special session on disarmament (SSOD I), in 1978, which provides for the Commission to make every effort to ensure that, insofar as possible, decisions on substantive issues are adopted by consensus. We know for a fact that procedural elements are cited in the outcome of SSOD I.

I wish to make it clear, therefore, that my delegation and, I believe, many other delegations in this room hope that the visa issue will be resolved through consultations among delegations and that delegations can discuss their positions and exchange viewpoints. We are all guided by our capitals and by line agencies and authorities. It will not be possible for me, on behalf of my delegation, or for my colleagues, on behalf of their delegations, to change positions within a minute or even overnight, because we are guided by instructions from our capitals.

There is a possibility now that we might be heading towards postponement, suspension or reconvening sometime in future, or we might continue to be in the room and not proceed with either postponement or suspension. But I wish to know, and I am sure that my colleagues also want to know, what the end game is. What is the implication for us after we take such action or consideration? Assuming that we proceed with suspension or postponement, what happens then? Do we all pack our bags and come back later to face the same situation? Or, if we do not suspend or adjourn the meeting, will we continue to sit in our chairs without making any further progress?

But I am a bit concerned that, at the end of the day, the delegations in this room are being pushed, or encouraged, to go towards the political line whenever there is a vote or the need to take a position. What we

are trying to do is decide. That is what delegations in the room would very much appreciate not arriving at.

Those are my thoughts. I really hope that delegations will, in their wisdom, come up with perspectives that will help us all, and I appeal to them to do so. Each one of us has mandates and instructions. I do not know what to report to my capital after attending meetings day in and day out without any results being produced. I do not know how to report to my finance Ministry in terms of the budgeting and the contributions that we make.

**Mr. Lee** (United States of America): We could not agree more with the Malaysian delegation on this issue. As we said before, we are very regretful about where we are today. As we have said many times, on many instances, over the past year and more, the appropriate forum for addressing concerns about visas is the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, not the Disarmament Commission.

We regret the fact that certain delegations have the grievances that they do; we are trying to work through those issues in the appropriate venue. We realize that the Russian Federation is dissatisfied with the results of the meeting of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country just a few days ago, but, unfortunately, that dissatisfaction should not be flowing into this forum and is not a justifiable reason for holding up the proceedings of today's organizational meeting. Unfortunately, we have to refuse to accept Russia's attempts to block the work of the Commission further.

As we have tried to clarify before, the Russian Federation has confirmed that it is not making a procedural motion to suspend or adjourn this meeting, which would, per rule 118 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, automatically trigger a procedural vote, to which all Member States in this body are entitled. It is not a matter of choice. However, because it is not being triggered, and because we strongly agree with Malaysia and other delegations that have voiced their desire to proceed in a consensual manner, I suggest that we proceed with the organizational meeting scheduled for today as well as the provisional agenda and move forward to elect the Chair and other officers and move on with business as planned.

**Mr. Morita** (Japan): I thank the delegation of Cyprus for the briefing regarding the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, which we listened to carefully. We are following the situation closely. We totally understand, as our Australian colleague also said, that

the issue is of deep concern and sincerely hope that it will be resolved very soon. However, at the same time, we cannot forget, as our Malaysian colleague said, that this body — the Disarmament Commission — is very important, especially considering the current security situation. Therefore, we should convene the session.

Regarding the suggestion of our Australian colleague concerning the election of the Chair and Bureau members in order to push the discussion, I think that it would be helpful for the Russian delegation, too, because proceeding with the election might help push the discussion of the visa issue as well. Of course, the visa issue should be dealt with by the Committee on Relations with the Host Country. Therefore, I wonder why proceeding with the election can be regarded as being against the will of the Russian delegation. Moreover, this is the organizational session, and we are talking about procedural issues. I do not think that we need heads of delegation to take a decision on such issues. So I think it would be helpful if the Russian delegation could explain why we need heads of delegation to do so and why electing the Chair and Bureau members would not be helpful.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to thank all of the colleagues who expressed their understanding regarding the situation that has arisen. I would like to call once again for everyone in the room to show common sense and use logic. All of us here have been sent from our capitals to hold a dialogue. But we do not have the possibility of holding that dialogue because the head of our delegation, as I have said on many occasions, has not been granted a visa. He is ready to come here at any time and has all of the instructions, including on the preparatory organizational issues for this session. I do not have those instructions. It has been said that we are all working on instructions from our capitals. My instructions from the capital are to achieve the resolution of this issue and to agree on starting the work of the organizational session only when the head of our delegation can attend.

I would also like to comment on the statement made by our United States colleagues. We have heard some regret in what they are saying; perhaps some kind of conscience has awoken. Nevertheless, not everything that was said is correct. First, it is not Russia that is continuing to block today's meeting; rather, it is the United States, because it is not granting a visa to our head of delegation. Secondly, we have no cause to be

dissatisfied with the decision of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, as our colleague from the United States said we were. That is disinformation. We are very satisfied with the Committee's decisions because no one here in this room at that time expressed support for the unilateral actions of the United States, which violate its obligations under the Headquarters Agreement. Is there even one delegation here that would say that the United States is acting correctly by not issuing a visa to the head of our delegation? The Secretary-General himself said that he is very concerned by the situation and is not going to leave it as is. There is going to be communication with United States officials. The extreme perspective would be arbitration.

The issue has not been resolved. Progress has been made and we are satisfied with it, but we think that we need to give our United States colleagues time to finally decide to do what they are supposed to under the Headquarters Agreement. Accordingly, we believe that there is no justification at this point in time to move forward and start the work of the organizational session. We are not referring to any regulations or putting forward any motion. We are simply calling for common sense. We are a delegation like everybody else. And if others have the possibility to participate in the session, we do not have that possibility at the moment because of our American colleagues. We are asking for support — that is all. So let us postpone all of the preparatory and substantive negotiations until all delegations can attend the session in the composition decided by their capitals. That is our right as a State Member of the United Nations.

**Ms. Jáquez Huacuja (Mexico):** I will speak in English for the sake of clarity and speed.

First, I want to express once again our discomfort with this situation. We are sympathetic to the situation of the Russian Federation and other delegations that have reported experiencing problems with their representatives' ability to attend meetings at the United Nations. Owing to the situation, we have been talking about the issue in this room on and off for a year. We are very concerned, because this is not the place to talk about this issue. We have already expressed our position in the First Committee and also here last year, and now I have to reiterate that, while we believe that it is a very important issue of a crucial nature, as has been said here, all delegations indeed have a right to be

represented at the right level; this is not an issue for the Disarmament Commission.

We very much thank the Ambassador of Cyprus for the report and for explaining what has been happening in the other Committee; we have taken note of the efforts made in that regard. We wanted to express our opinion because we are very concerned about the stall of the disarmament machinery in general. We have had reports from Geneva that the Conference on Disarmament is not working either. However, at least what is being discussed there pertains to the Conference's agenda; whereas here, we are unable to start substantive work or, now, to resolve organizational matters because of issues that do not pertain to our agenda. Therefore, we have to raise a flag of caution, as we are very concerned that maybe it is because of the issues on the agenda that we cannot move forward. In that sense, we reiterate that this is the place to discuss disarmament issues, as my friend from the delegation of Malaysia said. This is a deliberative body, in which, given the world's current security situation, we should be discussing issues. Moreover, this is the component of the machinery specifically devoted to deliberation.

My other comment with regard to the machinery is that, as is repeated quite often here, this body is consensus-based. I would like to remind colleagues here that it was defined at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) that the Disarmament Commission

“shall function under the rules of procedure relating to the committees of the General Assembly with such modifications as the Commission may deem necessary and shall make every effort to ensure that, in so far as possible, decisions on substantive issues be adopted by consensus” (*resolution S-10/2, para. 118(b)*).

From the point of view of the delegation of Mexico, those conditions are not being fulfilled right now. The visa question is not a substantive issue, and there is no possibility of ensuring consensus. Therefore, we need to abide by the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, because that is a decision that we took in relation to this body.

In the interest of moving forward, my last comment is that we think that it would be very fair to elect the Bureau and the Chair and thus fulfil the aims of the organizational session. That would also be very good for the delegations that have questions and need to continue

dialogue with the host country and the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, because they would have the structure to help them in the dialogue that is needed to move forward.

We therefore ask delegations to consider taking the organizational decisions, at least, if we cannot continue moving forward on the substantive issues. We also propose making use of and profiting from the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, in accordance with the decisions taken at SSOD-I.

**Mr. Balouji** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I appreciate the briefing we heard from the representative of Cyprus on the results of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as an active Member of the United Nations and based on its Islamic belief, a rational calculation of its national security interests and its bitter experience of having been the victim of the most systematic use of weapons of mass destruction in contemporary history, attaches great importance to the international disarmament machinery, including the Disarmament Commission and its desired role of overcoming threats to international peace and security.

We expect that the international community will not allow the monstrous shadow of the threat of inhumane weapons looming over us to continue indefinitely. This indeed is our collective responsibility — to promote the role and functions of disarmament machinery as it relates to the security of every one of us. In that regard, the Disarmament Commission, as the specialized deliberative body within the disarmament machinery on specific disarmament issues tasked with submitting concrete recommendations to the General Assembly, is another body within the machinery that is being affected by the lack of accountability and responsibility of the United States. As a result, it has been unable to convene its substantive meeting since last year.

It is a fact that the host country not only continues to disregard its obligations under the General Convention and Headquarters Agreement, but also deprives us of normal living conditions and imposes upon us a policy of maximum harassment. So far, nothing has been able to stop the United States from imposing such an irresponsible policy, resulting in the creation of tragic hurdles to multilateralism. Regrettably, we have witnessed a very unfortunate trend that is led and caused by the host country. The United States of America has been stubbornly refusing to issue visas

for certain State representatives to attend meetings, including those of the Disarmament Commission. That damages not only the affected Member States, which cannot be properly represented in those meetings, but also does severe damage to multilateralism in general and the United Nations and its Charter in particular.

It is now clear and verified that the Committee on Relations with the Host Country has no strength, the host country has no will and the United Nations Secretariat is waiting for a finite and reasonable time. The Islamic Republic of Iran once again voices its strong protest to the host country and expresses its deep concern about the host country's repeated failure to abide by its legal obligations. In fact, against the backdrop of the current international situation, we are of the view that the two issues on the agenda of this cycle of the Commission, namely, nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, are exactly the two crucial requirements for international peace and security. Any pretext aimed at preventing the Commission from organizing its substantive meeting is unacceptable to Iran.

However, the facts are obvious. We emphasize that the work of the Committee should be guided by the urgency, high priority and prime importance of realizing a nuclear-weapon-free world and a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, first proposed by Iran in 1974, and an outer space free of an arms race.

In conclusion, we express the same concerns and views raised repeatedly by the Russian delegation and believe that neither should the work of the Commission be stopped nor should the United States take the work of the Commission hostage by not issuing visas. The prerequisite for commencing the routine work of the Commission is to redouble our efforts to confront the bullying policies of the United States of America first.

Last but not least, we insist that the Commission continue its long-standing method of decision-making — by consensus.

**Mr. Tozik** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I will be very brief, but I would like to share our comments on today's discussion.

No one is disputing that the Disarmament Commission is currently one of the only platforms — possibly the only one — where decisions are made by consensus. Unfortunately, there are enough platforms where we have to vote. If we want to turn the



Commission into one of those types of bodies, that is p to us, but we need to think about the consequences of such actions and such a decision. All of us have a responsibility to make the decision about whether to turn the Disarmament Commission into yet another competitive body in which we all vote and do not take decisions by consensus. I call for common sense and ask one and all to think about the consequences of our actions today. Additionally, I ask that we think about a sensible approach to addressing the situation that has arisen.

My second point is that the Committee on Relations with the Host Country showed that there is a possibility for a solution to this issue in future. The Secretary-General is taking steps in that regard, including holding negotiations with the host country. Moreover, the Secretary-General's legal adviser promised to take certain steps to address the situation. As we understand it, this question is being addressed. Let us therefore allow a little bit more time for this to be done, and let us listen to the delegations that proposed postponing the session so that the Secretary-General and the heads of the United Nations Secretariat can have the time to do the job that they are currently doing.

**Ms. Sánchez Rodríguez (Cuba)** (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba reiterates its full support for the work of the Disarmament Commission and reaffirms its soundness and relevance as the only multilateral deliberative body specializing in the consideration of pressing disarmament and international security issues. We believe that the Commission should resume its substantive work as soon as possible, but only through honouring the practice of decision-making by consensus.

Paragraph 118 (b) of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) and the principles of the sovereignty equality of States and the full participation of all Member States in the work of the United Nations, on an equal footing and without discrimination, are, in the view of the Cuban delegation, an issue that is both substantive and objective.

We reject the manipulation of rules and the negative precedent that would be set by a vote. The United States seeks to legitimize its policies, ignore its unmet obligations and perpetuate its violations by asking for a vote.

We condemn the host country's repeated violations under the Headquarters Agreement, particularly sections 11, 12 and 27, and those under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961. Those violations are undermining the integrity of the United Nations. As an affected country and a victim of that arbitrary, discriminatory and illegal policy, Cuba condemns the use by the United States of its role as host country to selectively and arbitrarily apply the Headquarters Agreement to prevent participation in the Commission's work under equal conditions by delaying or denying visas for representatives of a Member State. There is no legal basis for the restrictions and bans imposed by the host country on access to the United Nations and participation by representatives of official delegations of Member States in meetings of the Organization. It is deeply regrettable and of great concern that despite the processes undertaken by the affected countries, including the extraordinary meeting of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, to date no solution has been found in the established forums to put an end to the non-compliance and violations of the Headquarters Agreement by the United States.

As an affected country, we support the Russian delegation's proposal for more time to be made available to hold consultations and for the necessary high-level diplomatic measures to be undertaken so as to resolve all pending organizational issues and enable the Commission's substantive work to begin. This is not a bilateral matter. To deliberately affect the ability of Member States to be represented at United Nations meetings is a threat to multilateralism and jeopardizes the full and effective functioning of the Organization and of the Commission. This is not a procedural matter but a substantive issue. It is an objective concern, and we advocate that consensus be preserved.

**The Acting Chair:** I have one more request for the floor, but before continuing, let me say what I wanted to say. I have heard the word "discomfort" used and people talking about common sense. There is no one who is experiencing more discomfort than me at the moment. Although there is a request for common sense to prevail, there is not much in common on anything in this room at this stage. That said, I will now give the floor to the next speaker before I continue with what I intend to do next.

**Mr. Jiménez (Nicaragua)** (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation would also like to express the position that

has been put forward with regard to the importance of preserving the spirit of consensus in the Disarmament Commission. We regret that an understanding regarding the situation currently facing us has not been reached in this room at this time. However, we are concerned that that will have an impact on our work in the area of disarmament and in moving forward with the Commission's agenda.

We listened very closely to all representatives, and we believe that everyone has a valid point with regard to trying to make progress and resume our work as soon as possible. We greatly deplore the fact that, after these days of consultations, it was not possible to resolve the visa situation of the representative of the Russian Federation. We therefore hope that, with the new developments that have been reported, we can still resolve the issue so that we can begin our work soon.

I agree that every effort must be made so that we do not lose the spirit of consensus in the Commission. We do not want to see this issue exclude a delegation, because that delegation is fully within its rights to demand respect for sovereign equality, and other delegations have been affected. At the same time, the host country has the responsibility to comply with its obligations under the Headquarters Agreement so that we can all participate with sovereign equality. I regret that we are in this situation and could not find a solution but we want to put on record that our delegation advocates and supports the spirit of consensus.

**The Acting Chair:** There are three speakers remaining on the list of speakers. My appeal to representatives is to try and move matters forward. I hear that people want to place things on record but I would really appeal that we try and move forward and not repeat things that we have already heard in the room.

**Mr. Horne** (Australia): No one would want to put you, Sir, in any more uncomfortable a position than you have already been in. We thank you for the role that you are playing here.

I just wanted to note the reflection that it is clear from all the interventions that there is a deep commitment to the Disarmament Commission functioning this year. There is a distinction between the procedural matters that will allow us to do that and the outcomes on substantive matters. I believe there is no one here who would feel that if a Member State has not been adequately included in a substantive matter, the tradition of this body would not be to proceed to

a vote on something on a substantive matter over and above whatever objection it has. The issue that we have now is a very specific one as to how we actually get to the point when we can sit down together and have a discussion on where a consensus might be. If we are going to reach that point, we need to have a Chair and a Bureau.

I made those points earlier but, also reflecting on the conversation, I have heard people talk about goodwill and trading on the good nature of the Committee. The proposal that has been put forward to adjourn was not made consistent with the rules of procedure. It was not circulated. Nothing was consistent with rule 120. The delegations that are advocating that position have been very guarded on whether or not they intend to make the proposal to adjourn under rule 118. Under rule 119, we have four items that would take precedence over what we are doing now.

In terms of what you, Sir, may wish to consider in thinking about our next steps, I would be keen to hear where exactly in rule 103 there is scope to have a discussion about the rules of procedure like this, which is inconsistent with everything in rule 119. There is nothing under rule 103 that suggests that we can interrupt the process from going from nomination to election. The nominations have been put to the Commission. They are the names that are now before us. I would be grateful for a clarification as to why, whatever the discussion, we are unable to now move to the immediate election of those officers so that we have path forward. Hopefully, we can ease your discomfort soon, Sir.

**Ms. Rodríguez Martínez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We, too, take this opportunity to thank the representative of Cyprus for having informed us about the deliberations within the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

As we have already said at previous meetings, for our part we believe that it is very important to ensure that the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission take place, insofar as we recognize its significance as the only specialized deliberative body in the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, particularly this year as the Organization marks its seventy-fifth anniversary. At this time, there is a spirit of revitalization and re-engagement with multilateralism, and we are reminded of the importance of focusing

on the values of dialogue and understanding and the foundations of what brings us together.

Today, while recognizing disarmament as a necessity in the world in which we live, we must also acknowledge the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, which enables all Member States and their representatives to participate on the basis of equality in this magnificent building.

In that regard, we would like to recall that the representation of our States is a substantive issue that must be taken into account. It cannot be dismissed, particularly in a context where we have the duty to revitalize multilateralism and to ensure that it is up to the task of meeting the challenges facing us to guarantee international peace and security. We cannot speak about that from outside but, on entering the conference rooms of the United Nations, completely disregard the fact that ensuring the equal representation and participation of all Member States and respect for their sovereignty and their ability to decide the delegations that will participate in deliberations is an essential part of multilateralism.

We would like to emphasize the aforementioned and reflect on that because it seems that, in their attempt to overlook that small detail, some representatives want us to make the mistake of sacrificing the tradition of consensus within the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission. Not only have we not given enough thought to the importance of strengthening multilateralism as a whole but also, in addition, we are going to undermine a practice that has governed and ensured harmony in the Commission in terms of taking decisions.

As we have done in previous situations, we would like once again to call for consensus so as to preserve that practice, which is so important to all our countries. We would also like to ask members to support representatives who, to that end, are requesting more time in order to try and receive a positive response so that the necessary actions can be taken to resolve the issue without sacrificing consensus as the working method of the Commission.

**Mr. Wu Jianjun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, China fully understands the position of the Russian Federation on the visa issue and its legitimate concerns. We propose that the Secretariat and the

parties concerned engage in constructive mediation in order to resolve the relevant issues as soon as possible. The representative of Malaysia has just mentioned how our representatives can report to our capitals regarding the progress of the extraordinary meeting and our Australian colleague talked about the long-standing practice of the Disarmament Commission on many occasions.

China would like to reiterate that over the 42 years since its establishment, the Commission has had a tradition of consensus. Parties must cherish that tradition and uphold the principle, since only through consensus and consensus-based outcomes can those decisions be implemented effectively.

**Mr. Alberto** (Angola): On behalf of the Group of African States, I would like to commend the Secretariat for its efforts to steer the work of the Disarmament Commission towards the election of the Bureau for the 2020 substantive session and other organizational matters. The African Group sympathizes with the concerns raised at the organizational session convened on 18 February regarding the issuance of visas to delegations to attend the upcoming 2020 session scheduled from 6 to 24 April (see A/CN.10/PV.376). The Group believes that such matters can be resolved through the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

We also believe that the host country should take into account our collective desire for the full participation of all Member State delegations at United Nations meetings and should fully implement its obligations under the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations of 1947. The Group regrets that similar circumstances occurred last year, leading to the inability of the Disarmament Commission to convene in a formal setting.

The African Group hopes that the Disarmament Commission, which is an essential component of the United Nations disarmament machinery, will receive the full support of all Member States to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

**Mr. Lee** (United States of America): We have listened to everyone, and we share many of the views expressed by other representatives who have taken the floor. We agree on many fronts and are equally disappointed and frustrated. But we have been in this

situation for a year now. Unfortunately, the matter before us is clearly procedural, not substantive.

Regrettably, we cannot let issues that are not germane to the Disarmament Commission prevent us from holding the very important dialogues on disarmament that we have all been wanting to have so that we can reach consensual conclusions that will make global progress on the matters to be addressed by this body. In order to prevent this group from continuing to face the predicament in which we find ourselves, we would like to formally put forward a motion to proceed to the election of the Chair and the other officers of the Bureau. In the light of some of the objections already raised by speakers, we would therefore like to call for a vote on that matter.

**The Acting Chair:** The United States has put forward the proposal that the Commission consider agenda item 3, "Election of the Chair and other officers".

I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation on a point of order.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation would be against a decision being taken in the Disarmament Commission by a vote. In that regard, I refer to paragraph 118 (b) of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (resolution S-10/2), which provides for the Commission to modify its own rules of procedure. We would ask for a vote to be called on the Disarmament Commission's procedure for taking decisions. The wording should be as follows:

(*spoke in English*)

Is consensus the basis for decision-making in the Disarmament Commission?

**The Acting Chair:** The representative of the Russian Federation has raised the question as to whether the Commission wishes to continue with its work on the basis of consensus, countering the motion put forward by the representative of the United States of America.

I give the floor to the representative of Australia on a point of order.

**Mr. Horne** (Australia): The request from the Russian Federation is clearly out of order. It is clear that we are under agenda item 3 in this session. If the Russian Federation wants to engage in a discussion on how decisions will be made in the Disarmament Commission going down the track, it would have to raise the matter

under the item "Any other business" — an item that we do not yet have because the Russian Federation is not letting us adopt an agenda. So in our view, there is no way that we can proceed with that vote. There has been a request made that is in order by the United States, and we should immediately proceed to that vote.

**The Acting Chair:** I now give the floor to the Russian Federation on a point of order.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): With all due respect to our Australian colleague, we cannot agree with this interpretation of the situation in which we currently find ourselves. We cannot vote on the proposal made by the United States because we first want to raise a question, if generally we can vote at all, because we are referring, as I said, to paragraph 118 (b) of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (resolution S-10/2). We believe that the decisions taken here should be taken by consensus, and we call for a vote on that issue. If this issue is voted on, then voting on the proposal made by the United States would not make any sense. We think that this is a very important issue and should be voted on before we vote on the proposal made by the United States. We would insist on this.

**The Acting Chair:** My understanding of the rules of procedure is that we would proceed on the basis of rule 121, which basically says,

"Subject to rule 119, any motion calling for a decision on the competence of the General Assembly to adopt a proposal submitted to it shall be put to the vote before a vote is taken on the proposal in question."

That means that we would actually go to the Russian proposal first.

I give the floor to the representative of Australia on a point of order.

**Mr. Horne** (Australia): Apologies for coming back. It is not a question of the competence of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC); it is a question of whether or not this proposal is able to be considered at this point. This is not a question of the UNDC's competence. The UNDC is subject to rules of procedure. We know they apply. There are also the rules contained in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (resolution S-10/2); we know that they apply.

This is an unfortunate path we are going down now, but it is absolutely clear that if the Russian Federation wanted us to have a conversation about how we take our decisions going forward, it would raise a proposal in accordance with an agenda that it is not allowing us to adopt. So the point of order is that that rule does not apply.

**The Acting Chair:** We are faced with a little bit of a dilemma here from the Chair's point of view, because we are basically going around in circles on this issue. We basically have to vote on whether we want to vote on something else to vote on. So I am just going to confer with our legal counsel for one second. I want to be clear on how we should proceed going forward, because we are now already into talking about voting on things, and I just want to be clear what we can address first.

So I have listened very carefully to what has been said in this room, and the thing that stands out the most for me is the reason why the Commission actually needs a Chair from a Member State to conduct these things.

That being said, we are not in agreement on a number of things in this room. What I would like to do is suspend this meeting for 10 minutes to consult with a couple of delegations.

*The meeting was suspended at 12.30 p.m. and resumed at 12.55 p.m.*

**The Acting Chair:** I would like to move forward if we can. I will open the floor again and request that delegations try to move this issue forward. We all know where we are; we have all heard what people have said. I need to find a way through this impasse, taking into account the fact that I am not the representative of an elected Member State. The Secretariat is trying to move this thing forward so that everyone here, as Member States, can make headway.

I am cancelling the list of speakers who were supposed to take the floor and open the floor to anyone who wishes to speak.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We regret that the Acting Chair is in such a difficult situation. We did everything we could to try to prevent this from happening. I would like to draw the attention of everyone in the room to the fact that we have only 15 minutes left until the end of the meeting. In those 15 minutes, we could chop down a forest by changing a practice that has existed for many years. We therefore would like to suggest that we return to

our proposal and postpone our meeting for a reasonable period of time, giving the Secretary-General an opportunity to try to find a solution in collaboration with the host country. Then, perhaps, we could convene this organizational meeting anew once a decision is made and our representative finally gets a visa. Then we will no longer have to break the Commission's time-honoured practice of consensus. In any case, our proposal is still on the table.

**The Acting Chair:** The representative of the Russian Federation has made a proposal, which is not new to us.

**Mr. Hassan** (Egypt): Since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor, I would like to first echo my colleagues in commending your efforts, Sir, in steering the work of this body. You have our full support and sympathy.

Egypt aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/CN.10/PV.376), so I will not speak about how much we appreciate the disarmament machinery, including the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), or reiterate our position on the hope regarding the fulfilment of obligations under the Host Country Agreement.

I will not take sides in this argument. But we have humbly submitted our position, and we strongly believe that the Commission is not competent to reopen the outcomes of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Regardless of the outcome of our meeting today, or on 6 April, what we need to see is an honest and loyal implementation of the rules that established this body. We do not think that the UNDC is in a position to make its own interpretation of the rules that established it. Another special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament would be needed for that to happen. Until then, we must be quite cautious on framing and phrasing what we are voting on here.

I repeat that, for us, paragraph 118 (b) is clear. It was drafted very carefully for good reasons. Last but not least, when we report back to our capitals, we have the responsibility and the obligation to inform them that whatever decision is taken on the suspension or adjournment of this meeting or subsequent UNDC meetings was taken based on a rule of procedure that was agreed upon.

**Mr. Hallak** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I will try to be brief. At the outset, my delegation attaches a great deal of importance to the work of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body in reporting recommendations to the General Assembly on such sensitive issues as international security. In my earlier statement, I failed to thank the representative of Cyprus for his briefing. I would now simply like to add to what he noted by stating that my country had, within the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, requested that, before the end of March, the Secretary-General give that Committee a full accounting of the actions he has undertaken with respect to the issues before him.

Today's attempt to change established working procedures within the Disarmament Commission is a serious matter that I warned about in my earlier statement. In 2008, the United States hampered the adoption of a final document that the Commission could adopt by consensus. At the time, no one challenged the United States. Today, the delegation of the United States, which is the host country of the United Nations Headquarters, is attempting to impose a working method of its own, not only rejecting final documents, but compelling us to work in the way it wants us to.

I would like reason to prevail. Changing the established working methods of the Commission by abandoning consensus would have a negative impact on the work of the Commission and other international bodies in the disarmament field, thereby affecting international security. This is a matter of utmost concern to all Member States. We are therefore facing a dilemma that I would like my colleagues to recognize. We do not approve of the cherry-picking entailed by accepting one working method and rejecting others while manoeuvring hither and yon. The issue before us is simple — either we pursue our work on the basis of established practice, namely, through consensus, or those Member States calling for voting in the Commission will have to shoulder the full responsibility of opening up what we would call a Pandora's box.

**The Acting Chair:** I have a number of speakers requesting the floor. I hope that they are going to come up with proposals that will move us forward, because we are not actually moving forward at this stage. I have only heard repeated comments, except for the point made by the representative of Egypt, who noted that the Disarmament Commission is not competent to reopen the first special session of the General Assembly

devoted to disarmament, and therefore we need to be extremely cautious in what we are trying to do and what we are doing without reinterpreting things.

**Mr. Nasir** (Malaysia): Mindful of the limited time we have left, it being a couple of minutes before 1 o'clock, I am taking the floor to specifically acknowledge the very fair point raised by the representative of Egypt. All of us are beginning to ponder the same question: is the Disarmament Commission competent to reopen the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament of 1978 (resolution S-10/2), or is it not competent to reopen that document? As we try to manoeuvre, my delegation just wants to ascertain that we are taking the right decision and that we are acting in accordance with the rules of procedure and a practice established for many decades. Before Member States are asked to take action or decide on anything, we want to be enlightened enough on the question raised by the representative of Egypt: is the United Nations Disarmament Commission competent to reopen the outcome document of resolution S-10/2?

**The Acting Chair:** Malaysia is the second delegation now talking about whether this body has the competence to adopt a decision and wishes to continue to practice consensus in the work of the Commission. If we were to proceed to a vote on this particular question, it would be in accordance with rule 121 of the rules of procedure. I would like to ask the delegations that have raised this question if they wish to proceed down that road or not. Is anybody asking for that? If nobody is, then, at this stage, I am just hearing people debating this issue.

**Mr. Morita** (Japan): Since there is not much time, I will not speak for long. I share the concern of my Egyptian and Malaysian colleagues. Japan is not sure whether we should discuss modifying the rules of procedure. My Egyptian colleague clearly said — and we agree — that there is clear background behind the language of the mandate set forth in the outcome document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10-2).

**Ms. Jáquez Huacuja** (Mexico): I want to share the following concern. I want to pose the question to the legal adviser in order to make it very clear whether the United Nations Disarmament Commission is able or has the necessary mandate to make changes to decisions made in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament

(resolution S-10/2). I have a further question. If we are unable to do that, should we even be meeting? Since we have been unable to have the organizational meeting, I wonder whether this meeting of the United Nations Disarmament Commission is proceeding with full legitimacy. We have not elected a Chair, we do not have a Bureau and we have not started the substantive work of the Commission. I am not sure we should be taking this type of decision. I would request clarity from the legal adviser and the Office of Legal Affairs.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I just want to say that the proposal on which the Russian Federation has requested a vote does not change the decisions of the tenth special session but seeks to clarify them. If you, Sir, would like to put other questions to the vote under rule 121, our proposal should be put to the vote first. But I would like to again emphasize that the best option for us all in order not to get lost in confusion over legal issues would be to postpone our organizational session until a more suitable time.

**The Acting Chair:** We are approaching the time when this session has to end, and I have not heard any solutions. We have taken a considerable amount of time to get to this point. Everyone is fully aware of that. I am not saying that more time will solve the problem, and I know that there are people in the room who are against us endlessly giving more time to the issue. But, ultimately, as a member of the Secretariat, representatives are putting me in a very difficult position because I cannot make a ruling on such matters unless I am explicitly given a proposal that makes sense to move forward on. I have yet to hear such a proposal to move this body forward. If someone would like to make another proposal in order to move us forward in the time that remains, I would appreciate it.

**Mr. Balouji** (Islamic Republic of Iran): We believe that what our Russian colleague mentioned is true, namely, that there is no intention to change the rules of procedure. The issue is just to respect the practice of 42 years. We know that in some other forums on the same issue there are several options to opt for a vote, but one has never been called based on those rules of procedure. We believe that we should preserve the valuable practice of consensual decision-taking. We also believe that the issue under question is not a matter of procedure; rather, it is a matter of substance, since it affects the manner and quality of participation of Member States in the session. Sovereign equality is

under attack. It therefore has implications for the way and quality of representation of Member States. We must take this very seriously.

As some other representatives said, for us the best solution is therefore to wait until the result of the consultation under way by the Secretary-General and other United Nations authorities is known to Member States. Pending that, we think that it is wise to postpone the organizational session, which can take place half an hour before the Commission's substantive session. We believe that this is an appropriate proposal. I do not think that time will allow us to take any other decision.

**The Acting Chair:** The only thing that I have heard in this room in the past few minutes is a return to the question being raised regarding the competence of the Disarmament Commission to adopt a decision on whether it wishes to continue its practice to work on the basis of consensus.

I give the floor to the representative of Egypt on a point of order.

**Mr. Hassan** (Egypt): For us and for other colleagues, I would like to ask if that entails an interpretation of the rules of procedure that includes the decision-making mechanism. If we vote on that, do we directly or indirectly imply that we are imposing an interpretation of the rules of procedure contained in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (resolution S-10/2)?

**The Acting Chair:** My understanding is that we would be voting on the competence of the Disarmament Commission to adopt a decision in that regard, whether it is the continued practice for it to work on the basis of consensus. Does that answer the question of the representative of Egypt?

**Mr. Hassan** (Egypt): It does answer my question. The phrasing of what we will vote on is a vote on the competence of the Disarmament Commission to reinterpret the rules of procedure on decision-making under rule 121 of the rules of procedure of the Main Committees of the General Assembly. Is that correct?

**The Acting Chair:** I want to be helpful, but I think that that rephrases it a little. I think that the question has been raised regarding the competence of the Commission to adopt a decision on whether it wishes to continue with its practice to work on the basis of consensus. That is what I am putting to the floor because that is what I have been hearing in the

room, without starting to try and reinterpret what we are actually saying in that regard.

I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

**Mr. Hassan** (Egypt): I apologize for taking the floor again, but it is because of the complexity of the situation that we have been put in. Hearing the proposal that you, Sir, are putting forward based on the current request of the Russian Federation, we are of course in favour of consensus on all matters. That is our initial preference. But again referring to the rules of procedure, there is a distinction between substantive and procedural matters. If that proposal is adopted as a result of the voting and we are all in favour of continuing the practice, and not the rule, of consensus in decision-making, would that prevent us from putting a procedural proposal to a vote? Does that mean that we are implicitly saying that we do not want to take a decision on a procedural matter, applying the rules of procedure of the General Assembly? If, because of a preference to preserve consensus, that would mean we impose a new interpretation of rule 118, I regret that I do not have the authority to do that in this meeting.

**The Acting Chair:** My understanding is that it is a two-step process. We would vote first on the competence of the Commission to take up the proposal of the Russian Federation and secondly on the proposal, if that makes sense.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Hallak** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for taking the floor once again. I fully echo what was said by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The issue is not procedural but substantive. We continue to request not to have a vote because by doing so, we would breach the norm that we have practised since the establishment of the Disarmament Commission, namely, taking decisions by consensus. For colleagues who suggested that we are modifying what was adopted in 1978, we are not modifying anything. I am talking about the proposal made by the representative of the Russian Federation. Paragraph 118 (b) is clear and explicit for everyone. We are not trying to reinterpret the Final Document, as we do not have the competence to do so. With regard to the working methods, it is a substantive rather than a procedural issue.

I have just stated that what we are doing is cherry-picking, taking one point and forgetting about the other points. The paragraph is clear and does not require any interpretation. Our request is to postpone the taking of any decision now.

I see that the representative of Cyprus, Chair of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, is among us now, so we will wait for the outcome of the request submitted to the Committee by my country to hold a meeting with the Secretary-General in person, given that he is the signatory, on behalf of the United Nations, regarding the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, to inform the Committee on the actions he has taken.

We therefore support the proposal to postpone the meeting and not to proceed with the voting. I stated earlier that in 2008 the United States rejected the Final Document. We did not challenge that rejection at the time, because despite the fact that the procedures allowed us to do so, we wanted to see all on board. So we respected others and expect the same from them now.

**Ms. Sánchez Rodríguez** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We had assumed that this was going to be a complex and difficult issue for all delegations represented in this room. Given our interpretation of the situation at the first meeting and at this resumed organizational session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, we have reiterated that the principle of the sovereign equality of States and their full participation, under conditions of equality and without discrimination, in the work of the United Nations represents a substantive issue and an objective concern.

We therefore support that the working methods for decision-making involve consensus, and we believe that this is a substantive issue, as stated in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (resolution S-10/2).

We note that there is no clear definition or agreed interpretation of the applicability of rule 118. If there is no shared understanding and interpretation of the legal basis for proceeding, then we support the proposal to suspend this meeting on a temporary basis, as requested by the delegation of the Russian Federation, until, first, a solution is found to the visa-related issues by the host country, and we acknowledge the fact that the Secretary-General is actively involved in finding such a solution; and, secondly, until we have a common understanding



of and clarity on paragraph 118(b), governing the work of the Commission.

My delegation believes in the rule of consensus and that our working methods must be based on the principles of equal representation and sovereign equality. These are substantive issues, and therefore the rule of consensus applies.

**The Acting Chair:** Seeing as this is the representative of Cuba's last week here, I had hoped that she would bring us a bit of relief in a proposal that would bring us forward. I thank her once again for all the time that she has spent with many of us here in the room.

**Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus):** I think that, bearing in mind the fact that we are in a deadlock situation here, and because of our reading concerning the rules of procedure and of the situation in general, probably the only wise thing to do is, rather than trying to solve it here, maybe we should revert to our mother body, the body that created the rules of procedure, the General Assembly. We can ask the General Assembly to clarify the meaning of the rules on which we do not agree and the state of our discussion here. So an idea could be for us to revert to the General Assembly and resume the session as soon as possible, when we get a response from the General Assembly.

**The Acting Chair:** We are about to lose interpretation, so I have to let the interpreters go. I do not see us making a lot of headway. I do not see us, with the proposals that have been put forward here today, making much headway.

The only thing I can do, and the question is whether representatives will allow me to do this, is make a ruling in my capacity as Acting Chair, to the best of my ability, to try to make this thing go forward. The next meeting we have is mandated for 6 April, so the only thing I can do is suggest that we come back on 6 April and pick up exactly where we are today and see how we can move forward.

That is the only proposal I can make. I would hope that all representatives can work with us in the interim period to try to move this forward. As the Secretariat, we will do our best to bring our side to this equation, but I would also like to appeal to all delegations in this regard. I know that it does not suit many of the requirements of

delegations in this regard. I am not saying that I am putting anyone's proposal forward it; I am not. I am making a ruling, as the Acting Chair of the Committee, that we next meet on 6 April to take up a decision that has been mandated by the General Assembly, where we can take these proceedings forward.

Is there any objection to my ruling?

I give the floor to the representative of the United States.

**Mr. Lee (United States):** We will take your ruling on board, Mr. Chair. But I just want to suggest that perhaps we could try to meet before 6 April, given that it probably will not lead to a swift outcome, allowing us to proceed with what we are intending to achieve beginning on 6 April.

**The Acting Chair:** I shall change my ruling a little bit. This resumed organizational meeting will be suspended to a later date, to be decided later. Do I hear any objection?

I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*):** I wish to thank you, Mr. Markram. You have indeed undertaken colossal efforts so far to save our meeting, but the first ruling that you pronounced and then struck the gavel is preferable to us because it gives us greater opportunity to really come to a decision, and it also does not give an opportunity to the United States to come up with new tricks in order to prevent us from meeting here.

I am ready to support the proposal by the representative of the United States to meet earlier, if he promises over the microphone that they will issue a visa to the head of our delegation. Otherwise, let us go back to your first ruling, which has us meeting on 6 April.

**The Acting Chair:** I shall make one more proposal: that this organizational meeting be suspended to a later date, either on or before 6 April. We will inform representatives accordingly. Is this acceptable to all delegations? I see no objection.

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.*