The meeting was called to order at 4.40 p.m.

Draft provisional agenda for the 2012 organizational session of the Disarmament Commission (A/CN.10/L.67)

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): I think that we have allowed ourselves enough time to discuss and reach an agreement on the proposed items. The Chair has continued to submit new proposals to try to reach convergence on all the positions. I think that I have demonstrated transparency with regard to the process I have followed, in an entirely frank and open manner vis-à-vis all representatives. I am grateful for the flexibility that many representatives have shown, perhaps even going beyond their own written instructions. But I think that we are at a stage where it is necessary to take decisions. That was the reason for the time I allowed from 3 p.m. until now.

The Chair has the following additional proposal to make to representatives.

Taking into consideration that this morning we discussed but did not tackle the general debate and the issue of conventional weapons, if we agree on the nuclear issue we will have adopted a complete package that includes that issue, conventional weapons, the question of working methods and elements for the fourth disarmament decade. I shall now read out the text of my proposal on the nuclear issue.

(spoke in English)

“Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons”.

(spoke in Spanish)

That is exactly the same language as that of the substantive agenda for the years 2009 to 2011, with the addition of the phrase “towards a world without nuclear weapons”. Members have had sufficient time to deliberate my proposal, both within the Non-Aligned Movement and in other groups, including the European Union group and certain other interested States from among the permanent members of the Security Council.

I would like to hear members’ views on that proposal.

Mr. Pintado (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish): I again thank you, Mr. Chair, for your transparency and flexibility. My delegation can support your proposal.

Mr. Langeland (Norway): I join the representative of Mexico. We can also support the proposal. We plead that others accept it. I do not think that we are crossing any red lines here. We urge everyone to accept it so that we can start working on substantive issues.
Mr. Cassidy (Indonesia): I would like to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Before doing so, however, let me speak briefly on behalf of my own country, Indonesia.

During consultations within NAM, I said to our colleagues that I felt like a broken radio. Putting that into the context of my having to again put forward the Movement’s position on this issue, I feel the same way. I have only one channel and it says the same thing. The reason is that others are receiving it very unconstructively.

Let me put it this way. It is not NAM that is not trying to accept any of your proposals, Mr. Chair, or those of any others. NAM has been flexible since the beginning of the informal consultations, even those during our group meeting with you, Sir. I say that not to lecture you, Mr. Chair, but to inform anyone outside NAM.

We have just heard a proposal that we heard before. It is very difficult for NAM to accept it. When we had consultations yesterday, our first proposal was that, rather than trying to find a specific formula — I fully agree and fully support Norway’s proposal — we should go with language on which everyone can agree. Like it or not, the only thing that we agree on at the moment is last cycle’s formulation. I do not agree with the argument that last cycle’s formula is one whose unsuccessfulness we have to experience again. I do not see it that way.

Last cycle’s agenda is the one on which everyone agrees. It is not NAM’s agenda. If NAM wanted its own agenda, we could put forward something stronger than that. But we do not want that. That is the reason we again asked this morning that we start by saying that we are flexible. We already agreed on the second agenda item during NAM’s consultations. It was very hard but, to be flexible, we can accept that, instead of an agenda item, we just have a discussion. Some colleagues feel very strongly that we should not equate this agenda item with the working methods. But we managed to take the position that we would be flexible and that it would only be part of the informal consultations. The same goes for the working methods. NAM would like to support what was already mentioned this morning in that regard.

I do not know why we have to go back to that position again. I am very confused by the fact that we cannot agree on this kind of thing. Let me again make it clear to everyone that NAM’s proposal is that we not go back to trying to find specific language. NAM has a position on this issue. I already told the Chair that. I think it would be useless to put it forward again here because it would not be agreed by the other groups.

Let me put it another way: going back to the original language of last year. Last year, it was an agenda item agreed by everyone. It was not NAM. If participants agree with that, NAM can reiterate the package that we put forward this morning.

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): I am going to respond immediately to what the representative of Indonesia said, since, as Chair, it affects me directly. I am certain that he is not trying to teach me a lesson. Nor would I accept one: not from him or from my father, who, unfortunately, is no longer with us. I am here to coordinate positions, not to receive lessons nor, of course, to give them. He said something that struck me, which is that he felt like a broken radio. I feel like a postman carrying letters from one place to another without any result. So I say to my dear friend that we are in the same position.

With regard to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), as a Peruvian, I belong to the group of founding members of the Movement. I have always respected the positions taken by NAM and have always stood by it. No one can say anything to me on that score.

Finally, my attitude has been fully transparent. We submitted the proposal of the Chair. If representatives wish to make some amendments to it, they can make the necessary changes. I am not closing the issue.

Mr. Seifi Pargou (Islamic Republic of Iran): Following the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) by my colleague from Indonesia, I can only say that I fully associate myself with his statement. I think that NAM has shown maximum flexibility in order to move forward. We call on the other party to be flexible and allow the Disarmament Commission to move forward.

Mr. Burns (United Kingdom): At this stage, I would like to align myself with those who have congratulated the Chair on his exemplary efforts thus far. I think that, at least on that issue, we have consensus. I hope that this may provide an auspicious omen for the remainder of today’s proceedings.

The United Kingdom is happy with the latest formulation. We believe that it has been put forward in a spirit of genuine compromise. In conjunction with the rest of the package, I believe that it is the best way forward at this stage. We would urge others sincerely to go along with this formulation.
Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): We thank you very much, Sir, for your continuing efforts to find a compromise and a way forward. The United States can live with your latest attempt at bridging differences — and clearly there are differences. We could also live with the formulation that you presented this morning. That is another demonstration of flexibility on the part of this delegation.

Rather than notifications of a fait accompli, I think we should all be a little bit more flexible on what you are proposing as splitting the difference and moving forward, especially when it comes to your latest suggestion, Mr. Chair. If I heard it correctly, that proposal identically reproduces the wording used from 2006 to 2011 for the nuclear agenda item, with an additional part that takes into account the concerns of other delegations. That is actually all of what some delegations want. It also respects the views of others in a spirit of transparency, flexibility and moving forward.

I want to be passionate about this, too, because we need to move forward. You, Sir, have shown us the way, not once but at least twice. I think that we should all take your advice, in one form or another, and move forward on this.

Mr. Novohatskiy (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): Our delegation would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, for the work that you have done with regard to your recent proposal, which we are ready to support. We believe that it is sufficiently balanced and allows for an opportunity for substantive work in the Commission.

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): I can see that, for the time being, we have not achieved the required consensus. Faced with this situation, I respect what the members of the Commission have said. I would like to say that members should not think that I shall leave this meeting and lengthy debate happy. We have come very close to finding a solution, but we have not yet done so. Ultimately, it is consensus that must guide our rules. At the same time, however, I would like very respectfully to request all colleagues not to use consensus as a rule intended to punish, as a veto or as a way of prohibiting something. The consensus rule should be for precisely that, namely, finding elements for common ground. We have not been able to do so.

In order to be able to continue with our work, I propose to the Commission that, given that the rules of procedure require one, we adopt a provisional “working agenda” without any substantive agenda items, and then proceed to the general debate. We have already failed to utilize two days. Unfortunately, because Friday is a holiday, we have one working day less this week. I am worried that we will not have enough time for working groups; but a little less so given the fact that, if there are to be no working groups on substantive items, we will have more time to listen to each other during the general debate in plenary meetings.

It is going to be very difficult for the Chair to tell the press that a group of 193 States has been unable to agree on a proposal made by the Chair that, frankly, with all due respect to all the positions, I believe meets all the requirements of all the parties present here at this meeting.

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Commission decides to adopt the draft agenda (A/CN.10/L.67) as I have proposed, namely, without substantive items, so that we can move on to the general debate — just so that we can get in an hour’s work, given that it is already 5 p.m.

The agenda was adopted.

Organization of work

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): For the general debate, bearing in mind that we have less time to make progress, I should like to appeal to all representatives, if possible, to appoint spokespersons to speak on behalf of regional and negotiating groups. I am not saying that people who wish to speak should not speak; it is not my place to say that. The speakers’ list is open. If all delegations wish to speak, they are welcome to do so. I am just making a kindly and practical suggestion so that we will have the necessary time to devote to hearing new opinions from delegations. Perhaps, in the meantime, a miracle will take place and we will be able to adopt agenda items, having already adopted a working agenda. Unless members have any objection, I shall proceed to the adoption of that proposal.

Mr. Pintado (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish): I apologize for once again taking the floor. This attempt might come a little late but, given all the work we have done on this issue, I would not want us to conclude today without making it. Once again, I would like to express my delegation’s gratitude and great respect for the Chair’s efforts, and for him personally as well.

I would like to ask whether the Chair will allow me to make a proposal based on his. Despite the fact that
a decision has been taken, perhaps we could continue with our consideration of the matter.

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): I am pressed for time, but, under the circumstances and given the stage at which we find ourselves this afternoon, any proposal could be very helpful. I am sure that the representative of Mexico's will be, so I will hear his proposal before we begin the general debate.

Mr. Pintado (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish): My proposal attempts to address what we believe to be the situation in this room. We have an agenda item on the nuclear issue that was agreed by consensus at the conclusion of the most recent session of the Disarmament Commission. Now we are trying to send the message that we would like to hold some debates that are a little more focused on this issue. As my delegation understands it, no delegation has taken a position on this issue of having a slightly more focused debate. There are differences on what that focus would mean and on the items we would focus on.

As I said earlier, the proposal that you have made, Sir, is completely acceptable to my delegation. But it will not resolve the doubts that some delegations have. I must say that those doubts must be understood in the context of the deliberative nature of the Commission, so that we might perhaps overcome them. I say this by way of introducing my proposal.

It seems to me that the phrase “a world without nuclear weapons” in the item proposed by the Chair refers to the initial proposal, where it mentions “for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons”. Therefore, the proposed “a world without nuclear weapons” could also be read as a reference to the goal of nuclear disarmament.

My proposal is therefore to eliminate the colon after “nuclear weapons” and replace the word “towards” with the word “for”. The proposed item would therefore read as follows: “Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons for a world without nuclear weapons”. While it may seem to be the same proposal, as we understand it, it is not exactly the same; it would indicate that the recommendations on the issue of nuclear disarmament would be aimed, for example, at achieving a world without nuclear weapons. As we see it, that would mean their total elimination. That would also imply non-proliferation issues, with the aim of achieving a world without nuclear weapons.

That proposal could possibly help us find a solution that is more acceptable to all delegations. We do not understand the meaning of the word “towards” as a process, but rather as a clear objective “for a world without nuclear weapons”. This will possibly help delegations find a solution.

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): I believe I was right in allowing the representative of Mexico to make a proposal, since I believe that it is one that many delegations may be able to agree to.

A new proposal is therefore before the Commission, namely, to amend the proposed substantive nuclear item to read as follows: “Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons for a world without nuclear weapons”. I should like to hear opinions on this issue, although I do not believe that we need to elaborate much on the matter.

Does anyone have anything to propose, or should we leave this matter to be digested by delegations and take it up at tomorrow’s meeting, prior to the general debate?

Mr. Seifi Pargou (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me again to thank you, Mr. Chair, and your team, for the hard work you are doing, and to thank our colleague from Mexico for putting forward that proposal. We will consider it, Sir, and we will get back to you at our next meeting, which will be held tomorrow morning. However, we have already conveyed our position to you, Sir, and put forward our position in this regard within the Non-Aligned Movement group. We align ourselves with the proposal made by the Non-Aligned Movement. I hope that this new proposal will be considered again. Until then, let us have more time on that.

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): We await the opinion of the representative of Iran first thing tomorrow morning.

Mr. Burns (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Mexican delegation for its suggestion. It seems eminently sensible, given the circumstances. I would just further propose that if we are accepting “for”, on the grounds of redundancy we might look at one of the other references to nuclear disarmament or nuclear weapons in order to propose “Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation for a world without nuclear weapons”.
The Chair (spoke in Spanish): I would like to ask the representative of Mexico whether that amendment to his proposal is acceptable to him.

Mr. Pintado (Mexico) (spoke in Spanish): I think that, in order to avoid unnecessary confusion, we should perhaps put aside matters of grammar and style. It is important that we keep the proposal as I suggested, especially since deleting the colon could lead to a different interpretation.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I am prepared to consult my capital on Mexico’s proposal — and I thank them for their constructive suggestion — on the basis of the suggested amendment by the United Kingdom. That is, on the basis of Mexico’s original suggestion and the United Kingdom’s suggested amendment, I am prepared to consult my Government on another opportunity for progress.

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): Just to be clear, what you would consult your Government on would be the text “Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation for a world without nuclear weapons”? Is that correct?

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): Yes, it is.

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): I have taken due note of that.

With regard to the proposal made by the representative of Mexico, to whom I am grateful, I shall take it that the Commission agrees to reach a conclusion on this matter at the beginning of tomorrow’s meeting, before continuing with the general debate.

It was so decided.

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): I would like to draw the Commission’s attention to the working paper contained in document A/CN.10/2012/WP.1, submitted by the delegation of Poland under this agenda item.

Election of other officers

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): As members will recall, the Commission still has to elect two Vice-Chairs from the Group of African States; one Vice-Chair and a Rapporteur from the Group of Asian and Pacific States; and one Vice-Chair from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

I should like to inform the Commission that the Group of African States has one candidate for one of its two remaining posts of Vice-Chair of the Commission, namely, Mr. Djamel Moktefi of Algeria.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has made its nomination for its remaining post, namely, Mr. Rodrigo Pintado of Mexico.

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Moktefi and Mr. Pintado as Vice-Chairs of the Commission.

It was so decided.

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): I have been informed that consultations on the election of a Vice-Chair and a Rapporteur from the Group of Asian and Pacific States are still ongoing.

On behalf of the Commission and the members of the Bureau, I would like to warmly congratulate the Bureau’s new members and wish them every success in discharging their duties. I am sure they will make an important contribution to the smooth functioning of the Commission. On a more personal note, I would like to say how happy I am that such worthy candidates have been elected to support the work of the Chair.

General debate

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (spoke in Spanish): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

CELAC wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the 2012 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. The group wishes to express its satisfaction at seeing a member of the Latin American and Caribbean region presiding over the work of the Commission this year. We are certain that your extensive experience in disarmament affairs will make a positive contribution to our work. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.
We congratulate and warmly welcome the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Angela Kane, whose statement at the beginning of the session reaffirms the strong commitment of the United Nations to the disarmament agenda.

CELC also expresses its appreciation to Ambassador Sergio Duarte of Brazil for his work as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs during the past five years. CELAC reiterates its willingness to work constructively so as to complete the complex tasks entrusted to the Commission. We hope that this session will achieve substantive progress and thereby enable us to develop specific recommendations on the agreed agenda items.

CELC reiterates the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament mechanism, which allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues leading to the submission of concrete recommendations to the General Assembly.

CELC regrets the lack of agreement in connection with making recommendations on the agenda items of the previous five cycles of the Commission, and reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission fulfilling its mandate as set out by the first special session on disarmament. We call on the States Members of the United Nations to show the flexibility and political will necessary to make progress on recommendations for this new cycle.

The Community reiterates its firm stand in favour of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as its deep concern at the threat to humankind posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. In that regard, our group reaffirms that the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination. The group therefore reaffirms the importance of complete, transparent, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament as the highest priority, and also reiterates the priority status of nuclear non-proliferation.

The CELAC countries have a long tradition of involvement in disarmament issues and deem them a priority on the United Nations agenda. We see disarmament as a key component of efforts to promote and maintain international peace and security.

In the framework of the establishment of CELAC, its heads of State and Government adopted a special communiqué on the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in accordance with its long-standing position in support of a world free from nuclear weapons.

In the framework of the establishment of CELAC, we reiterate that Latin America and the Caribbean is proud to be the first densely populated area of the world to be declared a nuclear-weapon-free zone, by means of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, or the Treaty of Tlatelolco. That reflects the identity of our region and makes clear that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones strengthens international and regional peace and security, as well as the non-proliferation regime. All of those developments represent a major contribution to the objective of nuclear disarmament. In that context, Mr. Chair, the Group recognizes the personal commitment that you have made to these issues as former Secretary General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We urge the nuclear-weapon States to withdraw all of their reservations to the Protocols of the Tlatelolco Treaty, thus helping to eliminate the possible use of nuclear weapons against the countries of the region.

CELC calls for the complete and balanced realization of the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT): nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The Community stresses the importance of achieving the universality of the NPT and therefore urges those States that have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear States.

CELC urges nuclear-weapon States to comply with their nuclear disarmament obligations under article VI of the Treaty and to show leadership in the fulfilment of their commitments under the Treaty, particularly through the implementation of the practical steps towards nuclear disarmament agreed on at the 2000 NPT Review Conference and in the context of the action plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference. We call on the nuclear-weapon States to redouble their efforts along the agreed lines.

CELC reaffirms its commitment to the application of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards system, as required by the NPT, and urges all States to implement those safeguards in accordance with their international obligations.
CELAC wishes to highlight the holding of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in May 2010, and the adoption of a final substantive document after years of stalemate. The Community reiterates the urgent need for accelerated progress towards the full implementation by nuclear-weapon States of their commitment to achieving the priority goal of nuclear disarmament and the elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons, by means of irreversible, transparent and verifiable initiatives.

In that context, CELAC, taking into account the commitment made by nuclear-weapon States to ensure rapid and concrete progress in connection with measures leading to complete disarmament, urges those States to respond to the urgent call contained in action 5 of the action plan, and to report to the 2014 NPT Preparatory Committee on the progress made.

CELAC urges those States whose ratification is key to the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to accelerate the process of signing or ratifying that instrument. In that context, the Group welcomes the ratification of the CTBT by Ghana, Guinea and Indonesia, as well as by two countries of our region, Guatemala and Trinidad and Tobago.

Each ratification brings us closer to full adherence to the Treaty. CELAC calls on all annex 2 States that have not done so to ratify the Treaty as a matter of priority as evidence of their political will and their commitment to international peace and security.

CELAC reaffirms the inalienable right of States to develop research, production and the peaceful use of nuclear energy without discrimination pursuant to articles I and II of the NPT. The group also reaffirms that all parties to the Treaty undertake to facilitate and have the right to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States reiterates its unwavering commitment to working for the convening of a high-level international conference to identify ways and means for eliminating nuclear weapons as soon as possible. The aim of such a conference would be to agree on a phased programme for the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame. The programme should prohibit the development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and provide for their destruction.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States reaffirms its willingness to cooperate with the Chair and the members of the Bureau to achieve concrete results at this session. The Group reiterates its call on all delegations to show the necessary political will to achieve a good result.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): Prior to 1999, the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) adopted 16 guidelines and recommendations and played a leading role in the field of disarmament as a deliberative body. However, for more than a decade, the UNDC has not produced many visible outcomes and has failed to make a substantive contribution in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. In that regard, we fully share the view expressed by the Chair in his letter dated 27 March that a lack of political will cannot be an excuse for a continuing stalemate in the Disarmament Commission, given its role as a deliberative body to bridge the diverging views of Member States in negotiations.

In the light of its universal representation, the Disarmament Commission has an important role to play as a venue where States Members of the United Nations can hold candid discussions on specific ideas in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Japan strongly supports the Chair’s leadership in revitalizing the UNDC. In order to assist the efforts of the Chair and to facilitate the discussion among Member States, Japan intends to submit a working paper shortly. We hope that it will assist Member States not only in reaching a consensus on the agenda items but also in engaging on substantive issues, even at this year’s session.

The success of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has built momentum for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. However, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva failed once again this year to adopt a programme of work, and there are still no prospects for the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. With the international conference on establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East scheduled for this year, we should spare no effort to build momentum for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation within the UNDC as well.

In setting the agenda for the UNDC, we must examine what kind of substantive input will be of
greatest benefit over the next three-year cycle with respect to the Commission’s relationship to other forums and as we look ahead to the 2015 NPT Review Conference. In that regard, Japan strongly supports the specific ideas presented by Poland in its working paper, which give us clear guidance as to how the UNDC can produce tangible results.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, while disarmament efforts of some nuclear-weapon States, including the New START agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation, are under way, the reality is that we still have a long way to go before we achieve a world without nuclear weapons. The positive momentum generated by the 2010 NPT Review Conference and the recent Seoul Nuclear Security Summit stands in contrast to the continuing proliferation of nuclear materials and nuclear technology and to the great threat it poses to individual regions, as well as to the world at large. Although sanctions based on Security Council resolutions have been implemented, various instances of violations continue to be reported.

Efforts not only towards disarmament but also towards non-proliferation are essential. In that connection, we believe that the UNDC should address the issue of non-proliferation and disarmament at the same level. Furthermore, in the light of the Chair’s significant expertise in disarmament and non-proliferation, elements such as regional cooperation, which includes the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, warrant due consideration.

In addition to the pressing issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, issues related to conventional arms also require due consideration. This is an important year for arms control, as the negotiating conference for an arms trade treaty and the Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects are both to take place.

Japan believes that, given the universal representation within the UNDC, it is meaningful for us to engage in discussions on arms control for conventional weapons, which pose a tangible threat to a great number of countries. Japan welcomes the Chair’s ideas to deepen our discussions on improving the role of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament, as well as on measures to build confidence among Member States in the field of conventional weapons.

Japan believes that the 2012 session of the Disarmament Commission should also engage in a broader discussion that encompasses the widest possible interests of Member States. In that regard, we believe that the strengthening of the functioning of the UNDC as a deliberative body on disarmament and non-proliferation is an appropriate subject for discussion. It is our view that such an agenda item would also incorporate the strong desire expressed by States members of the Non-Aligned Movement to consider the effectiveness of the UNDC in a broader context. We also believe that such discussion could also take in the issues to be raised in the context of the Fourth Disarmament Decade and the special session on disarmament.

The UNDC should also seek to determine how it can play a useful role in various forums that deal with issues related to disarmament and non-proliferation. Even if we are not able to achieve a common view on the subject, the UNDC should at least express its own understanding of the situation through such means as the Chair’s summary of the discussion.

In conclusion, this year’s deliberations at the UNDC come at an important juncture, which has been described as a watershed moment to determine whether we will be able to carry out meaningful discussion over the course of the next three-year cycle. Japan extends its fullest support to the Chair and will contribute to the deliberation in order to ensure that the UNDC can produce beneficial guidelines and recommendations on disarmament and non-proliferation, in accordance with its original mandate.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (spoke in French): Allow me to begin by conveying the sincere congratulations of the Algerian delegation to you, Sir, and your country, Peru, upon your appointment to the Chair of the Disarmament Commission and to assure you of our active support. It is also my pleasure to thank the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for having participated in the opening of our work and expressed encouragement with regard to our Commission.

I also take this pleasant opportunity to congratulate Ms. Angela Kane on her recent appointment to the lofty functions of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. We also thank her for her relevant statement.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on
behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group, respectively.

This session of the Disarmament Commission is particularly important as it is taking place at the start of a new three-year cycle and, above all, in an international context characterized by a calendar that is particularly heavy with a number of significant events in the area of disarmament. There are therefore high expectations in this respect. Moreover, the inability of the Commission to adopt concrete consensus recommendations for 12 years requires all Member States to take this opportunity to breathe new life — under your direction, Mr. Chair — into our work by demonstrating a true spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding.

As a unique specialized body for discussion in the framework of the multilateral disarmament architecture of the United Nations, the Disarmament Commission can assume its role by discussing, in a far-reaching and fruitful manner, a new agenda in a frank, constructive and transparent context. As it did in 1999, the Commission can affirm its leadership and make its contribution to reinvigorating the United Nations disarmament mechanisms.

Improving the functioning of the Disarmament Commission has been the subject of many debates that have led to many concrete proposals and recommendations. As an example, I would note decision A/CN.10/137 of 1996, entitled “Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission”, as well as General Assembly decision 52/492 of 8 September 1998 concerning the rationalization of the Commission’s work. Other measures are also contained in resolution 61/98 adopted in 2006, whereby the General Assembly adopted additional measures to improve the effectiveness of the working methods of the Commission. My delegation believes that those recommendations, completed through exchanges of view expressed in the framework of the general debate, offer sufficient opportunity to allow you, as Chair of the Commission, to draw the appropriate conclusions.

Nevertheless, I would underscore that the reasons for the deadlock in the Disarmament Commission are due in large part to a lack of political will and the national security concerns of certain nuclear States. With respect to the agenda of the current session, the Algerian delegation can only agree with the agreement reached between Member States. We must establish a balanced agenda on substantive issues, taking into account the concerns and priorities of all the Member States.

While welcoming this favourable international environment for dialogue and the implementation of some disarmament measures, at the same time we deplore the relaunching of the arms race. Indeed, that has led to the development of new, increasingly sophisticated types of weapons and to an accelerating increase in resources allocated to military budgets. In the face of many multifaceted major crises, humankind desperately needs those resources if it is to rise to the many and varied major challenges of poverty, disease, climate change and underdevelopment.

Algeria attaches particular importance to the Disarmament Commission and shall spare no effort to ensure the successful completion of its work at the 2012 session. Indeed, the Commission plays an irreplaceable role as a body for reflection and proposals. It provides Member States with the opportunity to consider in detail and examine all the issues concerning disarmament, including nuclear disarmament.

At this time, Algeria reiterates its principled position regarding the ultimate objective of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The effective and continuous commitment of the entire international community, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, is essential to the achievement of that objective. The very existence of nuclear weapons is an ongoing danger to humankind as a whole, which the unchanged military doctrines of certain nuclear-weapon States have perpetuated.

Nuclear-weapon States must therefore act in line with article VI of the NPT and the commitments they undertook at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty. In that regard, disarmament measures must be undertaken in accordance with the principles of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility. As a pillar of the NPT, non-proliferation must go hand in hand with the implementation of the other provisions of the Treaty.

Algeria recalls the importance of the provisions of article IV on the right of States to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. My delegation therefore feels that only a balanced approach that guarantees an effective and continuous implementation of the three NPT pillars, which mutually support and strengthen one another, will allow for the
promotion of that international instrument so as to attain its ultimate objective.

Along those lines, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the conclusion of an internationally verifiable treaty for the prohibition of fissile material are of the utmost priority. That also goes for the conclusion of an international legally binding instrument whereby nuclear-weapon States would provide security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States. In that context and so as to allow for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, Algeria underscores the need to launch negotiations on a nuclear-weapons convention to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and destruction.

There is also a need to establish a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East that would advance the nuclear disarmament agenda and maintain peace and stability in that turbulent region. The implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and the commitment of the international community are priorities for Algeria.

It is along those lines that my country calls on the Secretary-General and the three sponsors of the 1995 resolution, in close consultation and coordination with States of the region, to make all necessary efforts to guarantee the success of the 2012 conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction.

My delegation reiterates the central role of the United Nations as a universal multilateral framework for the review of disarmament issues. In that regard, we are convinced of the importance of revitalizing the multilateral disarmament mechanism. Algeria has therefore spared no effort for the effective revitalization of the Disarmament Conference, which is the sole multilateral negotiating mechanism for disarmament issues. However, as we all know, since adopting decision CD/1864 of 2009, the Disarmament Commission has not adopted a programme of work due to the differing views on the priorities and nature of the issues to be considered. We therefore hope that the States members of the Conference on Disarmament will adopt in 2012 a programme of work that is complete and balanced.

In conclusion, the Algerian delegation would like to reiterate to you, Sir, its readiness to actively cooperate with you and all delegations to ensure the success of our session.

Indeed, under your chairmanship, Sir, the adoption of relevant recommendations will be an undeniable contribution of the Commission to concrete progress on the road to disarmament.

Mr. Zieliński (Poland): I am speaking today on behalf of Ambassador Witold Sobków, Permanent Representative of Poland.

Mr. Chair, let me first of all congratulate you on taking up the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and assure you of the full support of the Polish delegation.

Poland is deeply concerned about the state of the UNDC, which has been unable to make any substantive recommendations since 1999. We are determined to make a serious contribution to overcoming the persistent impasse in the disarmament machinery. We support the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at the revitalization of the disarmament machinery, and we are ready to work together with all Member States to make progress in that regard.

We are also ready to join innovative efforts aimed at advancing the cause of arms control and disarmament and, in particular, ensuring the effectiveness of the disarmament machinery in responding to current security concerns. Poland is also determined not to create a precedent that could compromise the preferred method of decision-making in disarmament and arms control bodies, namely, consensus.

It should be noted that the ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission have been a subject for consideration at a number of Disarmament Commission sessions. Taking into account the current stalemate, we are of the view that the recommendations adopted during those sessions should serve as a basis for the UNDC’s work in years to come. For that purpose, Poland submitted a working paper on the functioning of the UNDC. The paper touches upon three issues that can help, in our view, to move the Commission forward.

First of all, according to a decision taken at the 1990 substantive session of the UNDC, if no agreement can be reached on a specific agenda item, the report of the Commission should contain a joint statement or a Chair’s summary to reflect the positions of different delegations. We are therefore of the view that, during the
current cycle, that option should be seriously considered if no agreement can be reached on consensus-based recommendations. Moreover, the Chair’s summary could be a part of each session’s outcome regardless of its final result, which would allow for a better depiction of the discussion and serve as a record that will be useful for future deliberations.

Secondly, in accordance with the report of the 2006 session (A/62/42), the Commission is encouraged to invite, as appropriate, experts on disarmament, including those at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, for discussions at its plenary meetings. We are of the view that such interaction would play a substantial role towards maintaining the deliberative character of the Disarmament Commission. The proceedings of such exchanges of views should also be reflected in the Chair’s summary.

Thirdly, our working paper recalls decisions made to encourage States to elect officers of the UNDC at the earliest possible stage. Those decisions have been partially implemented this year. In future, we should also make every effort to ensure that officers are elected in a timely fashion, allowing for preparation of the substantive session during informal consultations.

We should make every effort to overcome the stalemate in the disarmament machinery, which undermines the credibility of the United Nations. A workable UNDC is in the best interests of all United Nations Member States. Only a working Commission, deliberating and delivering non-binding recommendations to the General Assembly, as mandated, might serve the purpose of the so-called global zero.

We warmly welcome the Chair’s innovative approach and determination to put the UNDC back on track. He can count on the full support of Poland for his efforts in that regard.

The Chair (spoke in Spanish): I thank the representative of Poland for the document his delegation has submitted, which will serve as a basis for our deliberations.

Mr. Shin Dong Ik (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) for the 2012 substantive session. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. I am sure that your able stewardship will guide us through our deliberations for the next three weeks.

Last year, my delegation addressed the Commission with high hopes, as we had seen a number of positive developments in previous years. However, last year’s session failed to live up to our lofty expectations, and we found ourselves back at the same place again. It is indeed regrettable that we only succeeded in extending the lengthy stalemate of the disarmament machinery for another year. We should keep in mind the message that the Secretary-General delivered to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in January, when he made it clear that the General Assembly is ready to consider other options for moving the disarmament agenda forward if the CD remains deadlocked in 2012. The First Committee sent the same message at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. It is now time for the disarmament machinery to halt its endless debate and take action.

The UNDC is not an exception in this matter. Last year, the three-year cycle ended without any recommendations. For the past 12 years, the Disarmament Commission has failed to live up to its mandate to produce relevant recommendations. I sincerely hope that this year’s deliberations at the Disarmament Commission, now in the first stage of a new three-year cycle, will be able to facilitate global efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation, while simultaneously laying a sound foundation for furthering our common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. In that regard, I look forward to engaging in meaningful discussions in the following areas at this session.

First, in order to avoid another three years of inertia, the UNDC should engage in serious discussions on how this body can revitalize the global agenda of disarmament and non-proliferation. Given that the UNDC has failed to produce any meaningful outcome for many years, Member States need to have a clear idea and shared understanding of the very rationale of the Commission and its working methods. In so doing, we have to bear in mind the meaningful outcome of the 2010 high-level meeting organized by the Secretary-General as well as the follow-up debate at the General Assembly in July 2011.

Secondly, we need more focused topics for deliberation. As the next three-year cycle will be held during both the arms trade treaty process and the preparatory process of the ninth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a topic that is more focused on nuclear weapons and conventional weapons should be framed. We are open to any number of specific topics
within the field of nuclear disarmament and conventional weapons, with the one caveat that discussion of nuclear non-proliferation should be given equal weight to that of nuclear disarmament.

Thirdly, we should keep exerting our efforts towards resolving current issues, such as normalization of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). I will not delve further into the reasons why the CD should commence substantive work on a fissile material cut-off treaty at the earliest time possible or why the CTBT should enter into force as soon as possible. I just want to stress that we need those efforts to be made not only for nuclear non-proliferation, but also for nuclear disarmament. In addition, along with the ongoing efforts to achieve the universality of the NPT, my delegation believes that the monitoring and verification mechanisms of the Treaty need to be even further strengthened through the universalization of the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Additional Protocol.

I take this opportunity to address another barrier that needs to be overcome if a world free of nuclear weapons is to be realized. Indeed, the North Korean nuclear issue has long presented a serious challenge to the nuclear disarmament and international non-proliferation regime.

Over the years, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has announced its withdrawal from the NPT, conducted two nuclear tests and even revealed its uranium enrichment programme, the existence of which it had long denied.

The Republic of Korea remains committed to realizing the denuclearization of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in a peaceful manner and in close cooperation with the international community. Unfortunately, however, recently the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea again veered away from moving in a positive direction by announcing on 16 March that it will launch a so-called application satellite during the period between 12 and 16 April. Many States Members of the United Nations have expressed grave concern over the plan, since the launch will be a clear violation of Security Council resolution 1874 (2009), which demands that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea refrain from conducting any launch using ballistic missile technology. Given the fact that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has developed its weapons of mass destruction capabilities to the point of launching long-range missiles in 2006 and 2009, and followed such launches with nuclear tests in each case, there should be no doubt that the new launch will pose a greater threat to peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in North-East Asia.

The Government of the Republic of Korea, along with the international community, strongly urges the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to immediately stop such a provocative action and to comply with its international obligations, including those set forth under Security Council resolutions.

As you are well aware, Mr. Chair, the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit was held last week in Seoul. Leaders from 53 States and four international organizations participated in the Summit. They discussed how to strengthen the international nuclear security framework to prevent nuclear terrorism, with the ultimate goal of achieving a world without nuclear weapons. The Seoul communiqué translates the declarations of the Washington, D.C., Summit into concrete actions and provides measures to prevent nuclear and radiological terrorism in a comprehensive way. In particular, participating States agreed to put forward by the end of 2013 voluntary specific actions to minimize the use of highly enriched uranium. A number of countries also committed to eliminating or returning their stocks of highly enriched uranium to the countries of origin for disposal. We hope that the Seoul Summit will help to nurture transparency and confidence among countries, which is a vital element to generating further momentum in the disarmament and non-proliferation field.

I wish to conclude by reiterating the sincere hope that the UNDC will emerge from its prolonged impasse and once again play the central role that it can and must play in the field of disarmament. It is a task that falls upon all of us and requires our collective wisdom and a shared sense of responsibility.

Finally, Mr. Chair, under your excellent leadership, we look forward to being guided onto a path that bears fruit.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*