STATEMENT

by

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Mr. Chairman,

Poland is seriously concerned about the persistent stagnation affecting the multilateral disarmament mechanisms for more than a decade. In particular, we are concerned about the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, which, since 2009 reached a new dimension. It has to be emphasized that in 2009, the implementation of the arduously negotiated by the CD consensus decision on breaking the deadlock was frustrated by some of its Members without giving any convincing arguments for such an action. We regret that in this case the Conference’s Rules of Procedure were both abused and bypassed by mounting unjustified demands for yet another decision on the implementation of the just adopted programme of work.

It has been the second case, in just few years, of turning down the opportunity to break a decade-long stalemate. It is worth to recall that in 2006, the P-6 formula, adopted to facilitate the substantive work of the Conference under the guidance of the successive Presidents of the Conference, brought about the considerable intensification of the debates. Many Members of the Conference regarded this process as the practical implementation of the Rule 19 of the Rules of Procedure, which stipulates that the work of the Conference shall be primarily conducted in plenary meetings. The five Presidents of the 2006 session reinvigorated the Conference and proved that the Conference could make substantial progress on its agenda, even without the adoption of the mythical programme of work, just by observing strictly the Rules of Procedure of the Conference and working methods provided for therein. Although at the end of that session some Members prevented the Conference to finalize the achievements of the Conference and to record in its report such a successful breakthrough, the ideas of the 2006 Presidents, summarized in their document entitled “The P-6 Vision Paper” (CD/1809), changed the working methods of the Conference for the years to come.

In the last few years, we have noticed a growing opposition among CD Members to certain practices which have been used to unilaterally block the implementation of the consensus decisions of the Conference. The long procedural stalling tactics in the CD prompted some Member States to seek an alternative forum or process, in which substantive work could be undertaken on issues that are ripe for negotiations or for substantive consideration without, however, the constraints of the CD’s working methods. We believe that time has come to give a serious consideration to alternative ways of moving forward and beginning substantive work on issues that are ripe for negotiations.

Recently, we have seen how the crisis in the Conference has led to a serious soul-searching in other disarmament bodies, which also have roots in the decisions of the SSOD I, and which have themselves been struggling for some time with their own stagnation or, in other words, with their own crisis of identity. Strangely enough, these bodies, being a part and parcel of the disarmament machinery established by the SSOD I, instead of focussing on their own revitalization, preferred to concentrate on ways and means of bringing the Conference back to substantive work. It would be appropriate to recall in this connection the old Latin proverb saying Medice, cura te ipsum which means – physician, heal yourself.

It is understandable that in such circumstances, some CD Members, concerned with future of the Conference, which was mandated by the Final Document of the SSOD I to perform the functions of “a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of limited size taking decisions on the basis of consensus” concluded that, at this stage, there has been no prospect for overcoming the current impasse, and have come out with the proposal on the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts with a mandate to identify options, including the necessary legal
and procedural requirements, for launching negotiations of a treaty to ban the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. This has been a very timely proposal and, therefore, Poland gives it its full support.

On the other hand, we are sceptical about the advisability and practical usefulness of recent proposals put forward, concerning the revisions of the Conference's Rules of Procedure, particularly with respect to decision making by consensus or to the rotating Presidency. One should remember that some disarmament bodies, like the NPT Review Conferences, have in their Rules of Procedures provisions for reverting to voting in case of the absence of consensus. Nevertheless, they have never used this option, and even in the very difficult cases manifested their determination not to create a precedent that could compromise the preferred way of decision making in disarmament and arms control bodies, that is, consensus.

We strongly believe that the rotating Presidency in the CD gives the chance for each and every Member State to contribute to the work of the Conference in the foreseeable time span, without absorbing its sometimes limited human and organizational resources for too long. There are convincing proofs in the history of the CD Presidency that the representatives of small countries performed their Presidential duties in the exemplary manner. Extending the Presidency for the entire year will deprive small countries with limited representation in Geneva, of the possibilities to contribute their wisdom and experience to solving the security concerns of the contemporary world.

It has to be also emphasized that the continuity in chairing the substantive work in the subsidiary bodies, which are the preferred and well proven mechanisms for negotiations, is ensured by the well established and workable practice of the Conference on the appointment of Chairmen of subsidiary bodies, or Coordinators charged with specific task, for the duration of the whole session of the Conference. To put it bluntly, there is no need to reinvent the wheel!

Mr. Chairman,

In this context, let me remind you of the activities undertaken by the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, of which Poland is one of the members. Each of ten members of the NPDI continues to press for the CD to commence work on its core issues. We have strongly voiced our concerns with regard to the current state of the disarmament machinery in the statement delivered by Australia on behalf of NPDI at the meeting of the UN General Assembly on the follow-up to the 2010 High Level Meeting on CD, earlier this year. We will be continuing our practical, result-oriented efforts to overcome stalemate in the whole disarmament machinery, with a particular emphasis on the CD.

Poland is determined to make serious contribution to overcoming the persisting impasse in the disarmament machinery. We support efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at the revitalization of the disarmament machinery and we are ready to work together with all the States to advance the progress in this 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 disarmament machinery in responding to current security concerns.