

Canada

Opening Statement for the 2019 Session of the Conference on Disarmament

29 January 2019

Mr. President,

I wish to assure you of my delegation's support during your Presidency.

Looking across the current landscape in these opening weeks of 2019, we can see that we are at a point of inflection in our common enterprise of advancing toward disarmament. Whether through insufficient funding or by outright disregard for agreed obligations and commitments, states are abdicating their responsibilities to uphold the international rules-based order. In this troubling environment, it is incumbent upon this Conference, foremost among others, to reinforce this endeavour and re-assert the crucial importance of our work. Central to this task is to revisit our core principle: fundamentally, that arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament are essential for the security interests of all states.

Looking more closely to the immediate challenges holding frozen the negotiating mandate of this body, we share the view of many delegations that flexibility is necessary for progress across our various agenda items.

We share the observations of the Netherlands last week that the development of new disarmament measures should be the focus of this 2019 session. Similarly, we appreciated the Netherlands effort to give us a different perspective on our work and what matters by likening a Program of Work to a scheduling tool.

With this in mind, Canada judges that, overall, the work of the Conference in 2018 was of material value in advancing discussions on disarmament. Through the subsidiary bodies we not only improved our collective understanding of national positions on the agenda items, but actually went deeper in some areas to identify key issues or concepts on which there was scope for further work by this body. In the absence of agreement on a Program of Work, the subsidiary bodies allowed us to make progress in 2018 and we should build on that work in 2019. That said, some items are more ready for negotiation than others, and I would like to add my voice to that of a number of delegations which last week cited the FMCT as a priority for negotiation.

Canada considers that forward movement on the FMCT in the Conference is timely and urgent. The consensus report of the High-level FMCT Expert Preparatory Group, which has been transmitted to the Conference by the UN Secretary-General, is an excellent starting point for negotiations. If we cannot agree to negotiations in this forum on the FMCT, then we must pragmatically consider alternatives.

Mr. President, we welcome your opening comments last week on the importance of bringing gender perspectives into our disarmament work. For Canada it makes eminent sense to strive for inclusive processes and to foster a diversity of views on disarmament.

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Mr. President, we welcome your opening comments last week on the importance of bringing gender perspectives into our disarmament work. For Canada it makes eminent sense to strive for inclusive processes and to foster a diversity of views on disarmament.

In concluding, I wish to express Canada's on-going concern with the overall fragile state of the disarmament and arms control architecture. While CD members appear to have found a meaningful way to engage on the agenda items through subsidiary bodies, recent setbacks on arms control are worrying. Canada deeply regrets Russia's non-compliance with the INF Treaty and its lack of constructive engagement which threatens the viability of this landmark agreement.

The INF was born during the Cold War, at a time of great geopolitical tension. It is thus a useful reminder of the crucial importance of constructive dialogue on arms control and disarmament for our collective security, even in the face of a challenging security environment, because in such situations only dialogue offers a way forward. In this context, we call on Russia and the United States to maintain channels for positive engagement on the INF to resolve their differences or risk the further fraying of the existing arms control regime.

Thank you.