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First Committee

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 88 to 105 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair: All delegations taking the floor are kindly reminded to limit their interventions to 10 minutes when speaking in their national capacity and 15 minutes when speaking on behalf of several delegations.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): Let me join others, Sir, in sincerely congratulating you on your election and for the very effective manner in which you continue to guide the deliberations of the Committee. In the same vein, Sir, allow me to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Jamaica, for the very effective leadership he provided to the First Committee during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/70/PV.2).

I wish to begin by reaffirming the importance that Botswana attaches to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security. Botswana remains gravely concerned about the serious threats to international peace and security in many parts of the world, which arguably present the greatest challenge to human development. We are witnessing an alarming increase in instability, insecurity and violent conflict, causing untold devastation and human

suffering. The continuous loss of innocent lives and the escalating humanitarian crises have reached catastrophic levels, making it imperative for the international community to take urgent and decisive action. The choice of theme for this year's General Assembly, namely, "The United Nations at 70: a new commitment to action", is quite fitting in that it compels us all to pause and reflect on the past and make new commitments for a better future.

It is in line with that commitment that world leaders, a few days ago, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which represents a global vision for the sustained prosperity of humankind. The common sentiment is that peace, safety and stability are prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development.

The existence of nuclear weapons, terrorism and the illicit trade in, and circulation of, small arms and light weapons are some of the challenges that continue to pose a threat to peace and security, stability and development. The fact that nuclear weapons still exist brings into question the commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to achieve complete disarmament. The potentially catastrophic humanitarian impact of the use of such weapons of terror should motivate us to eliminate them once and for all. At the three conferences held on that topic in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna, it was concluded that no State or international organization had the capacity to address or provide the short- or long-term assistance and protection needed in the event of a nuclear-weapon explosion. It is for that reason that my delegation wishes to reiterate the point that the

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total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. Deeply troubling in that regard is the increasing involvement of non-State actors and radical extremists in most of the conflict situations around the world. Activities by such entities introduce additional layers of difficulty to conflict management and further complicate the complexities of responses to conflict in areas of unrest.

The month-long 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which took place in April and May, failed to agree on a draft outcome document. This is probably the time to seriously consider developing new international standards, including a legally binding instrument to prohibit their possession.

With regard to conventional weapons, Botswana remains deeply concerned about the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons. Their accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world is a cause for serious concern, because they have lasting consequences on the innocent, especially women and girls. In a world where borders are porous and nations are ever more interdependent, threats to security in any region have consequences for us all. The only difference is the degree of the impact.

It is against that background that we fully support efforts to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as the International Tracing Instrument. We fully appreciate, however, that, owing to resource limitations and the differing capacities of States, the realization of the goals of the Programme of Action remains a challenge. In addition, the second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts on 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, which took place in New York from 1 to 5 June, underscored the fact that new developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and designs, including the use of polymer components and modular weapons-systems, had significant implications for marking, record-keeping and tracing, while also posing a series of challenges to the implementation of the Programme of Action. It therefore remains imperative that the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International

Tracing Instrument be strengthened, and that other new methods be considered, if need be.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reaffirm its continued support for the efforts of the international community aimed at fighting challenges related to peace and security.

Finally, we wish all members of the Committee success in their deliberations.

Ms. Shum (Ukraine): On behalf of the delegation of Ukraine, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, and other members of the Bureau on your respective elections and to express our confidence that your diplomatic skills will lead our deliberations to a successful outcome.

In order to respect the requested time limit, I will deliver a shortened version of my statement. The full version will be available on our website.

Ukraine consistently supports a multilateral approach to the disarmament and international security agenda. While recognizing the difficulties inherent in implementing existing international treaties and in bringing new ones into force, we fully reaffirm our commitment to maintaining and strengthening the current disarmament machinery and international cooperation.

Ukraine, although a victim of Russian aggression, remains a reliable partner that continues to fulfil its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear State.

The Russian Federation unilaterally denounced the Partition Treaty between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the status and conditions of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine of 28 May 1997. Under the provisions of article 5 of the Treaty, the Russian Federation is obliged not to have nuclear weapons in the formations of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation, which is stationed on the territory of Ukraine. Given the strategic location of Crimea in the region, we cannot exclude the deployment of nuclear forces of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, which constitutes a serious challenge to the existing non-proliferation regime and must be dealt with by the international community. Moreover, we have been receiving evidence that the Russian Federation has deployed the means of delivery of nuclear weapons on Ukrainian soil in Crimea and has been renovating the relevant infrastructure there. In that regard, special

attention should be drawn to Russian Federation efforts to renovate two complexes for nuclear-weapon maintenance in the cities of Balaklava and Feodosia. The implementation of those plans challenges article I of the NPT, given that Ukraine has never given permission to the Russian Federation to deploy its nuclear weapons on Ukrainian territory. We have never maintained a military alliance with Russia. We therefore strongly protest the possibility of the deployment of Russian nuclear weapons in Crimea.

In order to save the nuclear non-proliferation regime, the international community must take very seriously the statements of Russian officials on their right to deploy nuclear weapons in Crimea and to reverse the nuclear disarmament that Ukraine had instituted there. Such aggressive plans constitute a serious challenge to the existing non-proliferation regime, and their fulfilment would contravene the non-nuclear status of Ukraine. The only way to protect the world from nuclear proliferation is to turn the Ukrainian rejection of nuclear weapons into a success story. Otherwise, it will become much more difficult to convince any country to refuse a national nuclear programme.

Ukraine remains a devoted advocate of the efforts within the United Nations system and at the regional level to address the illicit small arms and light weapons issue in all its aspects. Effective control over brokering activities and small arms and light weapons transfers are the areas where the international community should take more active steps. In that regard, Ukraine welcomes the coming into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, a comprehensive instrument that establishes common standards in that field, thus preventing conventional arms proliferation.

The military aggression of Russia against Ukraine has involved the use of regular military forces, heavy armaments, armour and aviation and has significantly damaged the existing system of arms control and the strategic deterrence architecture. The idea of disarmament has also been discredited. It cannot be acceptable to the United Nations that Russia has “suspended” its membership in the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and constantly evades honest and faithful implementation of the provisions of the 1992 Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, and the 1992 Treaty on Open Skies.

Let me also remind the Assembly about the illegal transfers of conventional arms from the Russian Federation to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the Donbas region of Ukraine. Russia dispatched a large amount of weaponry into the territory of Ukraine, thus deliberately destabilizing not only the regional situation but also international security and stability. Such illegal transfers included not only small arms and light weapons, but also heavy armaments. The amount of weaponry is simply unbelievable. As President Poroshenko mentioned in his statement during the opening of the General Assembly,

“Heavy weaponry and military equipment are concentrated in the occupied territories in quantities such as the armies of the majority of Member States can only dream about.” (*A/70/PV.16, p. 27*)

Despite the denials of the Russian Federation, there is plenty of proof of the illegal transfers of weapons and military equipment to illegal armed groups and terrorists in Ukraine. Such transfers and the excessive accumulation of arms have already destabilized regional security.

Ukraine recognizes and values highly the important role played by the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects in addressing post-conflict remedial measures with a view to minimizing the occurrence, risk and effects of the explosive remnants of war.

Having been a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction for over 10 years, Ukraine considers that instrument to be fundamental in minimizing the occurrence, risk and effects of landmines. Despite the current significant challenges in the security field related to the hybrid war being waged against our country, Ukraine fully complies with its obligations under those treaties. As a result of the armed aggression of Russia and the offensive actions carried out by Russia-guided illegal armed groups operating in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, our country now has to deal with a drastically increased number of dangerous explosive remnants of war, which have caused severe casualties among civilians, including children. Those explosive remnants of war, as well as anti-personnel mines, which have

indiscriminate effects, have been planted by illegal armed groups in residential areas and along the routes of communication between inhabited areas, thus violating the Convention. In fact, they pose more of a threat to the civilian population than to military personnel. As of today, approximately 5,900 hectares of territory have been cleared in the east of Ukraine. Over 26,000 explosive devices and mines installed by Russia-guided illegal armed groups and units of the armed forces of the Russian Federation have been destroyed, along with other explosive remnants left after artillery and mortar attacks, including those using the Uragan and Smerch rocket systems. Last year, the Ukrainian armed forces defused 82 objects and destroyed more than 13,000 units of explosive devices placed by the Russia-guided illegal armed groups.

Ukraine believes that it is vitally important for the international community to make every effort to ensure the proper implementation of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Mine Ban Convention, and we are willing to share best practices on existing technologies to detect and destroy explosive remnants of war. In addition, due attention should be paid to the needs of States parties to the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. Ukraine attaches great importance to further deepening cooperation with international partners in that field.

In conclusion, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the new challenge that we are facing today, which should be addressed properly by the First Committee, namely, the issue of hybrid war. Ukraine has become the object of external aggression conducted by a neighbouring nuclear State, a former strategic partner that legally pledged to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of Ukraine. Despite that fact, Russia still refuses to officially admit its direct military invasion. Today there is no doubt that Russia is waging an aggressive war against my country. In the wake of that war, more than 8,000 Ukrainians, including 6,000 civilians, have died at the hands of the Russia-guided terrorists and occupiers in Donbas. More than 1.5 million residents of Donbas have been forced to flee their homes and become internally displaced persons, moving to other regions of Ukraine. In order to mislead the international community, the

Russian leadership has ordered the removal of insignias from the uniforms of its military servicemen, and of identification marks from its military equipment; it has ordered the abandonment of its soldiers captured on the battlefield; and it cynically uses mobile crematoriums to eliminate the traces of its crimes on Ukrainian soil. Moreover, Russia's continues its aggression against my country by financing terrorists and mercenaries, and by supplying arms and military equipment to the illegal armed groups in the Donbas.

It is time for the international community to stop neglecting the issue of hybrid wars and start elaborating ways to prevent and tackle them. The First Committee has all the expertise and knowledge needed to launch such an effort, and I also hope that the Committee has the will to do so.

Ms. McCarney (Canada): Canada congratulates you, Sir, for taking on the important role of Chair at this time. We look forward to working together with you.

(spoke in French)

The proliferation and possible use of weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical or biological, remain among the most pressing challenges to global peace and security. Working together to strengthen the existing non-proliferation and disarmament regimes, as well as related standards, is not so much a political choice as a security imperative; we are called upon to do all we can to prevent those terrible weapons from being used again.

Furthermore, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that all countries fulfil their international obligations with respect to non-proliferation and disarmament. The international community cannot and should not tolerate the constant threats to regional and global security by States that do not respect those obligations. States such as Iran, North Korea and Syria must comply fully with their international obligations.

During the past year, the efforts of the non-proliferation and disarmament community have had mixed results. In a difficult global context, it is important that we overcome our differences so that we can achieve progress towards our common interest in preventing the proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction and related materials. The only solution is to build on our successes and continue our efforts with an unwavering commitment to achieving concrete results.

(spoke in English)

Canada was disappointed that no consensus was possible on the draft outcome document at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Nevertheless, a pressing need remains for all States to fulfil their nuclear non-proliferation obligations and disarmament commitments, and to work together to strengthen the multilateral nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. In that context, Canada continues to call — as a matter of urgency — for the immediate launching of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We were honoured to chair the Group of Governmental Experts related to such a treaty, and we warmly welcome the Group's final consensus report (see A/70/81), which was released in May. The report draws on the Group's substantive and technical discussions on aspects of a future treaty, and will undoubtedly provide useful signposts for future negotiators. Although important differences in perspective remain, we believe that the Group's experts developed a deeper appreciation of the various options for a future fissile material cut-off treaty, and a realization that their positions were not as divergent as originally thought. We hope that all delegations will read the report thoroughly and consider ways to promote progress towards negotiations. Canada also looks forward to submitting a draft fissile-material cut-off treaty draft resolution at this session of the First Committee that will build upon the significant work carried out by the Group of Governmental Experts.

Strengthening non-proliferation bodies and norms remains a priority. But despite those and many other efforts, proliferation continues to be a threat to international peace and security. We need to take action in the face of non-compliance, which threatens to undermine security and stability. In that regard, Canada remains deeply sceptical of Iran's nuclear ambitions. We believe that a nuclear-armed Iran would not only have devastating consequences for regional stability and security, but would also damage the integrity of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We appreciate the efforts of the P5+1, which resulted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran. At the same time, we will continue to judge actions, not words. Canada will therefore continue to support the essential role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in monitoring and verifying Iran's implementation of its commitments. Canada firmly believes that it is essential that questions surrounding the possible

military dimensions of Iran's nuclear programme be satisfactorily resolved in order for the international community to have confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

North Korea's blatant disregard for its international obligations and defiance of successive Security Council resolutions represents a threat to international peace and security. Canada calls on North Korea to cease its nuclear, ballistic-missile and space-launch-vehicle programmes, which are in clear violation of successive Security Council resolutions. North Korea's claims that it possesses the capability to both miniaturize nuclear weapons and launch a ballistic missile from a submarine are both provocative and destabilizing. In that vein, we strongly urge North Korea to refrain from further nuclear tests or launches involving ballistic-missile technology.

With respect to Syria, we commend the tremendous work done by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons programme. To date, Canada's Global Partnership Programme has contributed \$17 million towards the OPCW's efforts to destroy Syria's chemical weapons. We call on Syria to fully comply with Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), so as to ensure the prompt resolution of all ambiguities with regard to its declaration. We furthermore call on Syria to carry out its obligation to completely destroy its remaining chemical-weapons facilities. Canada is also gravely concerned by the continued use of chlorine-based weapons in Syria. The perpetrators of such heinous acts are in clear violation of international humanitarian law and need to be held accountable. Canada welcomes and fully supports Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), which provides the international framework for the establishment of a joint investigative mechanism to identify those who have committed those crimes, which we hope will eventually help to bring the culprits to justice.

(spoke in French)

With regard to the issue of conventional weapons, we welcome the positive results of the third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which led, under the leadership of Mozambique, to an ambitious agenda and the setting up of the new Committee on the Enhancement of

Cooperation and Assistance, which seeks to help States in honouring of their obligations through cooperation. We look forward to the next Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, and we encourage all States that have not yet acceded to the Convention to do so.

Canada is pleased to have participated, as a State party, in the first Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Canada has never used cluster munitions in its own military operations and has destroyed all of its stocks of such weapons. We remain committed to addressing the humanitarian impact of landmines and cluster munitions, and we have devoted more than \$223 million on that effort since 2006. We urge all States that have not yet acceded to the Convention to do so.

(spoke in English)

In the context of an uncertain global security environment, it is more important than ever to devote the necessary political will to revitalizing the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. It is our hope that the current session of the First Committee will be productive and provide direction towards meaningful progress to build upon our successes and address our challenges. Canada stands ready to lend its support in that effort.

Ms. Stener (Norway): Let me start by joining the other speakers in welcoming you, Sir, as the Chair of this year's session of the First Committee.

Our overall objective is a world free of nuclear weapons. Pending the total elimination of that category of weapons, we must continue our efforts to reduce their role. A world free of nuclear weapons will not be possible without a credible and robust non-proliferation regime.

The lack of an outcome document at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) earlier this year was very disappointing. Nevertheless, the NPT remains the foundation of the international non-proliferation regime. We all must do our part to implement and further strengthen non-proliferation obligations. That includes strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards and the additional protocol. The IAEA must be fully equipped to carry out its crucial non-proliferation work, including financially.

Syria and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remain proliferation challenges and concerns.

A political solution to those issues would greatly strengthen the non-proliferation regime. So, too, would an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Norway will continue to look for innovative and effective measures in the field of disarmament. The Oslo Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons inaugurated a fact-based approach to nuclear disarmament. Verification of disarmament, as developed through the United Kingdom-Norway initiative, is another example of such an approach. By exploring the technical and procedural challenges, our purpose is to demonstrate that collaboration between the nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States in nuclear-disarmament verification is both possible and necessary. We welcome the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and look forward to hosting the next plenary of the Partnership in Oslo next month. Such initiatives are essential for concrete progress on disarmament, as envisaged in article VI of the NPT. We seek mechanisms that can unite countries in constructively moving the disarmament agenda forward. We especially call on countries that possess nuclear weapons to do more to meet the disarmament commitments of the NPT.

Norway is a partner to the Nuclear Security Summit process, and we confirm our commitment to nuclear security. We must keep up our efforts to secure all nuclear material and to significantly reduce and eliminate the use of highly enriched uranium in all applications. We look to intensify our efforts on that important topic.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has created a strong disarmament and non-proliferation norm. More than 90 per cent of the world's declared stocks of chemical weapons have been destroyed. However, we remain gravely concerned about recent reports of the renewed use of chemical weapons in Syria and Iraq. We anticipate the forthcoming report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) fact-finding mission. It is crucial that the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism, established by the Security Council in its resolution 2235 (2015), be given full access to carry out its mission and identify those responsible for the heinous use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The Biological Weapons Convention remains a cornerstone of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. States parties should focus on areas where unity is possible and on pragmatic steps that can strengthen the Convention in a constructive manner.

Norway welcomes the substantive outcome of the first Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, held in Cancún, Mexico, in August. We consider the Arms Trade Treaty to be an important tool to address both the flow of arms to conflict areas and the lack of protection for civilians.

Valuable experience can be gained from the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The facts and realities from the field continue to guide the implementation of those instruments. The Mine Ban Convention has virtually ended the use of antipersonnel mines by establishing a strong norm against all production, trade and use, and by requiring the destruction of stockpiles. More than 160 State parties are bound by the Convention, and large areas previously contaminated have been made safe. We congratulate Mozambique, previously one of five most-affected States in the world, on becoming mine-free last month.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions held its first Review Conference in Dubrovnik in September. We are pleased that the Conference adopted a strong political declaration that condemns any use of cluster munitions by any actor. Reports of the use of cluster munitions in Syria, Yemen and Ukraine have resulted in swift and widespread condemnation, including by non-State parties. Norway is very pleased that universalization efforts have gained considerable momentum. However, recent data show that global civilian deaths and injuries from the use of explosive weapons continue to increase. That is one of the pressing humanitarian issues of our time. The Secretary-General has called on all parties to conflict to refrain from using explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. Norway strongly supports that call.

Finally, cyberthreats from State and non-State actors alike pose serious challenges to almost every nation, and constitute a potential risk to international peace and security. A just, stable and peaceful digital order can be achieved only if it is based on international law. Largely thanks to the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information

and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, it is now universally recognized that existing international law also applies to cyberspace. Further international cooperation is necessary and will benefit us all.

My delegation hopes that this year's session of the First Committee can assist in promoting the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda in a constructive and forward-looking manner.

Mr. Minty (South Africa): My delegation wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at the 2015 session.

I would like to associate my delegation with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of African States, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the New Agenda Coalition (see A/C.1/70/PV.2).

In the interest of time, my statement will be limited to general comments on the key issues, which will be covered more extensively in our national statements during the thematic debate.

As we meet for another annual session of the First Committee, we are reminded of the events of 70 years ago, namely, the establishment of the United Nations, the first use of nuclear weapons and the adoption of the very first United Nations resolution primarily devoted to the elimination of atomic weapons (resolution 1 (I)). As we reflect on the historic and more recent achievements of the United Nations in the area of international security and disarmament, we are also reminded of the unfinished business and the hard work that lies ahead.

We welcome the advances made during the past year in strengthening the multilateral disarmament and international security environment. However, much remains to be done. Of particular concern is the continuing impasse in the United Nations disarmament machinery established during the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978. The 19-year stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and the lack of agreement in the United Nations Disarmament Commission for many years are negatively impacting the multilateral system. The general lack of progress on nuclear disarmament is a source of growing frustration among the vast majority of States Members of the United Nations. Achievements in the area of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation remain particularly uneven.

The regime established by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is constantly reaffirmed by the majority of the international community, and many creative measures have been introduced to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation. Yet nuclear-disarmament obligations and commitments continue to be subjected to reinterpretation and further conditionalities. That is simply not sustainable. The argument that nuclear weapons are indispensable for the security of some States but not for that of others is not only illogical, it also lacks any credibility. It is South Africa's firm belief that nuclear weapons do not provide security, but rather they exacerbate insecurity.

The third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Vienna in December 2014, again reminded us of the devastating impact that a nuclear-weapon detonation would have. The very existence of nuclear weapons means that humankind faces the peril of a nuclear catastrophe, and all States should share the responsibility to prevent any use of those weapons. As our President, Mr. Jacob Zuma, said in his statement to the General Assembly on 28 September 2015,

“There can be no safe hands where nuclear weapons are concerned.” (A/70/PV.14, p. 9)

South Africa therefore welcomes the humanitarian pledge, which in particular urges all States parties to the NPT to renew their commitment to the urgent and full implementation of existing obligations under article VI, and calls upon all States to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap in the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons and to cooperate with all stakeholders to achieve that goal. While South Africa does not intend to host a follow-up international conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in the very near future, options for taking the humanitarian initiative forward remain under consideration.

South Africa is deeply concerned by the failure of the ninth NPT Review Conference to reach consensus on an outcome document. That was a missed opportunity for action that could have contributed to strengthening the Treaty. We are equally concerned about the continued failure to implement the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, including the convening of a conference, originally intended for 2012, on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in that region.

We therefore call upon all States parties to the NPT to implement without delay all the commitments and obligations agreed on in 1995, 2000 and 2010.

In the area of chemical weapons, South Africa welcomes the further progress made towards the destruction of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. We also welcome the progress made by other major possessor States parties to destroy their remaining chemical-weapons stockpiles and their abandoned and out-of-date chemical weapons. No cause could ever justify the use of such weapons, or any other weapon of mass destruction, by any actor, under any circumstances.

With regard to conventional weapons, South Africa, as a State party to the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, will play its part on the journey towards a world free of both anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. We encourage those States that have not yet done so, particularly those that possess such weapons, to join those instruments without further delay. We call on those States in a position to do so to assist requesting States in their national implementation efforts and to provide assistance to the victims of such weapons.

South Africa continues to believe that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects represents the central, universally agreed set of undertakings in that area. Its full implementation remains as relevant today as when it was adopted in 2001. Apart from national implementation efforts, the full implementation of the entire Programme of Action, including the provisions relating to international cooperation and assistance, remains of critical importance. Likewise, we look forward to the full implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, which represents a landmark in the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms and contributes towards curbing illicit transfers.

My delegation stands ready to participate actively in the work of this year's session of the First Committee and to join you, Sir, and other delegations in making a success of our work.

Ms. Harbaoui (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Tunisian delegation I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at its seventieth session and to express my delegation's appreciation for the work

done by Jamaica as Chair of the First Committee at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I would also like to assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation in the discharge of your mission, so that our work can achieve the results for which we all hope.

My delegation endorses the statements made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of Arab States and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/70/PV.2).

The First Committee is meeting at a critical time, as we are celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. At this time more than half of the global population lives in countries that possess nuclear weapons or are members of nuclear alliances. There are growing concerns about the humanitarian consequences that would result from the use of just one nuclear weapon. However, up to now no nuclear weapon has been destroyed as a result of a bilateral or multilateral treaty, and no negotiations on nuclear disarmament are under way. We must all therefore make efforts once again to promote nuclear disarmament with a view to freeing up resources that are currently allocated to the production and maintenance of such weapons, so that we can allocate them to economic and social development to promote democracy, to protect the environment and, consequently, to promote peace and international security. Tunisia welcomed the recommendations of the two initial International Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, which were held in Oslo in March 2013 and in Nyarit, Mexico, in February 2014, as well as the recommendations of the third Conference on the topic, which was held in Vienna in 2014. The work of that latest Conference culminated in the adoption of the Austria humanitarian pledge, which Tunisia endorsed during the work of the sixty-ninth session of our Committee.

Tunisia attaches great importance to multilateral efforts in the area of disarmament. We will continue to support all efforts aimed at promoting the limitation of nuclear weapons and at reducing the risk of nuclear proliferation. We believe that general nuclear disarmament is the best way to ensure that such weapons will not fall into the hands of terrorist or non-State actors. My delegation welcomed the observance, on 26 September 2015, of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. We have also affirmed our support for the holding of a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament to examine the progress

made in that area. The international community has clearly proclaimed the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Member States, however, are increasingly divided over the question of how and when such a goal could be reached. Those divergent views were very apparent at the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) held in May. Tunisia hopes to contribute to constructive progress towards achieving a dialogue that would help define the direction of our future policies to eliminate nuclear weapons, which would allow substantial resources to be freed up, which, in turn, could impact the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

The Middle East continues to be of great concern because of the refusal of certain parties to join the NPT and to put their nuclear installations under the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Energy for Atomic Agency. They have refused to do that, despite numerous appeals by other States in the region and the General Assembly in its many resolutions on the topic.

We wish to reiterate our disappointment about the results of the ninth NPT Review Conference. After four weeks of work in New York in May, there was a lack of consensus on the draft final document. In that regard, we call on the international community, particularly the influential Powers, to take urgent and practical measures to create a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East region. We believe that the establishment and implementation of such a zone, adding to existing areas free of nuclear weapons, would be the best way to make progress on nuclear disarmament. Tunisia, which strongly endorses such an approach, calls for the holding of a conference on the creation of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

As a result of globalization, the dynamics of the international arms trade have changed. Throughout the world, acts of violence are committed using small arms and light weapons during periods of conflict and after conflict. Such weapons are very easy to obtain because they are the subject of very lucrative trafficking and are poorly regulated. As a result, the uncontrolled proliferation of such weapons, which continue to undermine peace and security, have devastating consequences for civilians in times of armed conflict, with women and children often the main victims. We see the emergence of new companies that offer

maritime security services, as a result of the increase in piracy and because more and more light and heavy weapons are falling into the hands of terrorist networks in violation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). Tunisia welcomes the fact that the issue of the trade in light weapons occupies an increasingly important place in the mandates of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. Where such missions are deployed, they help to reinforce the rule of law and to fight such trafficking within the framework of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and through security-sector reform. Tunisia stresses the importance of having consistent, comprehensive and coordinated action that addresses questions of governance, security, development and human rights and humanitarian issues.

The Committee is well aware that Africa, because of its size, is among the main areas affected by the excessive and uncontrolled presence of light weapons, and is the continent most affected by all types of conflict. Our continent offers one of the broadest platforms for the illegal circulation of weapons of all kinds and calibres from all places. That reinforces the activities of terrorist groups. For that reason, we must all, as members of the international community, maintain a high level of commitment to implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We believe that the Programme of Action is the main framework for the activities that we carry out to prevent, combat and eliminate the trade in small arms and light weapons. Within that context, my delegation would particularly like to stress the efforts that should be made at the regional and subregional levels to address both supply and demand in the illegal trade in such weapons. We must impede the cross-border movement of illegal weapons, while preserving full respect for international law, particularly the legitimate rights of countries as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the importance that Tunisia attaches to all questions of multilateral disarmament, as well as our commitment and willingness to work in full cooperation with all stakeholders. I would also like to reiterate our call to the competent bodies to establish and strengthen their cooperation and to work with States at the national and regional levels so as to contribute to ensuring peace and security throughout the world.

Ms. Higgie (New Zealand): It gives me great pleasure to take the floor under your chairmanship, Ambassador Karel van Oosterom, and to continue the great tradition of support and friendship between us, as neighbours at the United Nations, if not actually on the world map. We look forward to working under your leadership to ensure that this session of the First Committee is significant, not only as an important anniversary but also as a turning point towards real progress on disarmament.

My delegation would very much welcome such progress. With regard to nuclear disarmament, progress is particularly necessary now in view of our collective failure to advance that issue when we met earlier this year for the latest five-year review of the Treaty on the Non- Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

New Zealand cannot agree with the surprising assertion that we have heard here that this year's Review Conference is to be regarded as having achieved its objective, given that it carried out a review of developments relevant to the Treaty. Rather, the position of New Zealand, and of the overwhelming majority of NPT States parties, is that a successful Review Conference is one that advances the implementation of all three pillars of the Treaty, including most notably the one least advanced — nuclear disarmament.

Some may be inclined to say that the aspirations for progress on nuclear disarmament, shared by countries like New Zealand and our fellow members of the New Agenda Coalition, are now unrealistic. But even NPT States parties more content with the status quo than we are must surely have found themselves dismayed at the lack of ambition reflected in the draft outcome language presented for adoption at the Review Conference with regard to nuclear disarmament. For many of us, that language would indeed have represented a step backwards from that agreed in 2010.

As it is, we are left without any outcome at all from the Review Conference — and equally, therefore, without its having defined for us any specific pathway for forward movement to give effect to article VI of the Treaty. It had indeed been the hope of the New Agenda Coalition that the Review Conference would have agreed to move forward on the preparatory work for the legal instrument necessary to give effect to the article VI obligation. But we had certainly not expected to encounter there a suggestion — albeit from only a very small number of States parties — that the negotiation of

a legal instrument for article VI's "effective measures" relating to nuclear disarmament was not only unnecessary but actually risked undermining the NPT.

To ensure that such a misunderstanding not be allowed to vitiate the long-standing support for the Treaty's provisions, New Zealand will chair a panel session next Thursday, 22 October, intended to shed light on the international law applicable in reality in that context. The discussion paper, which we will circulate shortly and which will be the subject of that panel, clarifies in some detail exactly how it is that a legal instrument on effective measures would reinforce the obligations of the NPT and would strengthen the credibility and standing of its disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Before moving on from nuclear-related issues, I would wish to note New Zealand's deep disappointment at the limited progress made since the 2010 NPT Review Conference towards a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. New Zealand's strong support for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is exemplified in the draft resolution that we will present this year as lead sponsor, supported by Brazil as well, on a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere.

Still in the nuclear field, I would also wish to recall New Zealand's strong support for the agreement reached in July between Iran and the P5+1 on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to ensure the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

Continuing my survey of the 2015 year, but in the interests of adhering to your timeline, Mr. Chair, I am saving for a subsequent statement much of what I would otherwise wish to say with regard to the Conference on Disarmament (CD). New Zealand will, of course, in its capacity as the Conference's outgoing President, introduce at the First Committee the annual draft resolution on the CD report.

More generally, in the context of the United Nations disarmament machinery, may I register New Zealand's hope that this session of the First Committee will also be able take action to secure a sustainable future for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). Member States are unified in their recognition of UNIDIR's valuable contribution on disarmament and non-proliferation issues; what is also now required is a commitment to ensure that the Institute receives the financial resources necessary for its survival.

I would like to move on now to the more positive side of this year's disarmament ledger. There has been much more to laud in 2015 in the field of conventional arms. Most momentous was the convening, last August, of the first Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We congratulate Mexico on its successful hosting of the Conference. The decisions adopted at that first Conference, like the Treaty itself, are a testament to what it is that the international community can achieve when it agrees to act decisively to address human security challenges.

We also congratulate the interim Head of the ATT secretariat, Mr. Simeon Dladla, and we assure him of our full support as he takes up his new role in December, as well as Nigeria for having now assumed the presidency of the Treaty. New Zealand remains committed to the full implementation and universalization of the ATT. To that end, I note that we will be co-hosting, along with Australia, an ATT side event at the forthcoming International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which is being held in Geneva in December.

Also positive was the successful hosting, just last month, of the first Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We extend our thanks to the Croatian Government for that. New Zealand welcomed the adoption there of both the Dubrovnik Political Declaration as well as the forward-looking action plan. We are confident that the Convention is in good shape and that our primary focus can continue to be to strengthen the increasingly well-established norm against any use of cluster munitions by any actor, and also to increase the number of its States parties.

In conclusion, I should like to revert to the broader context of the agenda before us at this year's Committee. I have already mentioned the two draft resolutions for which New Zealand is the lead sponsor. As a core sponsor, New Zealand would also wish to commend to colleagues here the New Agenda Coalition draft resolution entitled "Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World", the draft resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the draft resolution on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons draft.

The latter text builds, as we all know, on the highly significant joint statement on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, which is supported now by 159 countries. It is indeed the catastrophic consequences and increasing risk of a nuclear-weapon detonation that remain the primary motivation for

urgent progress on nuclear disarmament. It is New Zealand's hope that any body, such as an open-ended working group, that might be established by the First Committee will have a mandate that reflects the urgency of progress on nuclear disarmament and offer us the real prospect of that goal.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): As this is the first time I take the floor, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming your position and to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during this session of the First Committee and, of course, beyond.

Sweden aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of the European Union and, on behalf of the Nordic countries, by the representative of Finland (see A/C.1/70/PV.2). I would like to add a few comments from a national perspective.

Seventy years ago, the world was torn apart by war, tens of millions of people were killed, murdered or displaced and nuclear weapons were used for the first time, leading to destruction and suffering on a scale that no one ever thought a single weapon could cause. Today we again witness a world full of strife, entire countries being torn apart by war and regional conflict and millions of people leaving their homes in search of safety.

In our increasingly unsafe world, over 16,000 nuclear weapons still exist, the vast majority of them far more powerful than the bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The risk to humankind and to the world that those weapons pose in the current security environment cannot be exaggerated. In a world characterized by tensions, there is an increased risk that nuclear weapons will be used — by accident, miscalculation or design or by the eventuality that non-State actors may acquire such weapons. It is imperative that nuclear weapons never be used again under any circumstances and that the norm against any use be firmly upheld until we have achieved the total elimination of nuclear weapons, to which all countries have committed themselves. To achieve and maintain a nuclear-weapon-free world is the only real guarantee against nuclear weapons being used again.

It has also been 70 years since the United Nations was established, giving hope to a world, then destroyed by war, that a better future for humankind was possible, a democratic world in which all people would be treated equally and would have the same rights and obligations. Under the United Nations, the rule of law and a treaty-

based international system were firmly put in place, including for disarmament and non-proliferation. Painstakingly, we started to build the system on which modern international cooperation is founded. Treaty upon treaty, agreement upon agreement, slowly but surely, we have built a web of mutually reinforcing instruments and international organizations designed to keep us safe and secure and avoid a repeat of the past. We now have a choice: we can continue the construction of a collective security system or we can allow ourselves to move towards greater polarization and away from multilateralism. In the current security environment, that would be extremely dangerous.

There are some positive examples, however. The Iran nuclear deal should be welcomed, as should the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty. But with barrel bombs and the use of chemical weapons in Syria and Iraq, cluster munitions applied in many ongoing conflicts and the use of small arms and light weapons killing over 200,000 people yearly, clearly we need to do much more.

The existing rule of law needs to be extended into new areas of human activity, especially with regard to cyberspace. Additional rules and norms need to be developed to ensure peace and long-term sustainability of the outer-space environment, and to deal with emerging weapons systems such as lethal autonomous weapons systems, as well as existing ones, such as the most dangerous group of all, nuclear weapons.

Human beings — women, men and children — their welfare and their security need to be front and centre when we consider additional measures on disarmament and international security. We welcome the humanitarian approach to nuclear weapons and are proud to be part of the humanitarian initiative that went from being an effort by a small group of States to a platform of nearly 160 countries, including all five Nordic countries. It is essential that the humanitarian narrative continue to be pursued. We look forward to further attention being given to the impact of nuclear weapons in various parts of the world, including in countries that possess nuclear weapons, where that narrative has not yet taken hold.

We need to move further and faster on nuclear disarmament. The work that was accomplished in the Open-ended Working Group a couple of years back needs to be built upon and taken forward. We want to see a re-established Working Group that would be as strong as possible and with the broadest possible

participation, so that what is achieved will make a real and concrete difference on the ground. In the light of their commitments, it is the obligation of countries with nuclear weapons to participate constructively in that work.

We look forward to working with all delegations to make a difference on disarmament in the First Committee in order to strengthen the rule of law, the United Nations and the multilateral system.

Mr. Nduhuura (Uganda): I am happy to see you in the Chair, Sir, and therefore congratulate you and other Bureau members on your elections. I would also like to assure you of Uganda's full cooperation and support. I wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Courtenay Rattray, for his leadership and commendable work done during the previous session.

At the outset, my delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by His Excellency Mr. Abdurrahman Mohammad Fachir, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by Ambassador Vandi Minah, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/70/PV.2).

The end of the Cold War over two decades ago should have led to rapid progress towards the global elimination of nuclear weapons. Instead, the nuclear-weapon States continue to maintain thousands of such weapons, many on high alert, and continue to design, research and test and deploy new nuclear-weapon systems. Unless efforts are made by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their stockpiles under international agreements, other countries are also likely to acquire nuclear weapons, hence creating an arms race and providing an avenue for openly testing nuclear weapons through nuclear explosions and declaring nuclear capability. Nuclear States have a legal obligation under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to eliminate nuclear weapons within a reasonable time frame.

Nuclear weapons have the capacity to pose a threat to the survival of humankind, and as long as they continue to exist, the threat to humankind will remain. That, coupled with the perceived political value and prestige attached to those weapons, is another factor that encourages proliferation and non-compliance with international obligations. Moreover, it is of great concern that, even after the end of the Cold War, the

threat of nuclear annihilation remains part of the twenty-first century's international security environment. All States must intensify their efforts to outlaw nuclear weapons and achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

The 2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons highlighted the stark reality of the increasing divisions among States parties about the future of nuclear disarmament. We should seek to bridge those gaps and work together to ensure that the NPT can continue to serve as a vital element of global security.

Serious concerns related to the humanitarian dimensions of nuclear weapons have been voiced repeatedly in the Committee. When the horrific consequences of their use became apparent in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a clear position was taken, calling for the abolition of those weapons of extermination.

The use of nuclear weapons also raises important legal issues. Nuclear weapons are unique because of their destructive capacity and their uncontrollable effects in space and time. All rules of international humanitarian law apply fully to nuclear weapons; those rules notably include the rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution, as well as the prohibition against causing injury or unnecessary suffering and the prohibition against causing widespread, severe and long-term damage to the environment. The incalculable human suffering resulting from any use of nuclear weapons is unavoidable.

I am glad that the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session adopted a resolution declaring 26 September an International Day to further the total elimination of nuclear weapons (resolution 68/32). It is of the utmost importance that nuclear weapons never be used again, under any circumstances. The only way to guarantee that is through the irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons under effective international control, including through the full implementation of the NPT.

Uganda underscores the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and supports the adoption by the international community, which has remained committed to promoting the CTBT, of a treaty that could serve as a threshold for promoting the process of nuclear disarmament. We encourage the remaining annex 2 countries, in particular the nuclear-weapon States and those yet to accede to the Non-Proliferation

Treaty, to sign and ratify the CTBT. That Treaty is essential for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It is a legally binding, verifiable means by which to constrain the quantitative and qualitative development of nuclear weapons.

Around the world, people, communities and nations are grappling with the disquieting increase in radicalization and violent extremism, fuelled by identity-based conflicts and cultural and religious tensions. One can imagine the threat if nuclear weapons were to fall into the hands of non-State actors, in particular terrorist organizations.

Conventional weapons also continue to pose a significant threat to peace and security. We must give due attention to the scourge of small arms and light weapons and vigorously pursue our common endeavours to reduce armed violence, increase human security and promote sustainable development.

The illegal possession of small arms and light weapons continues to destabilize communities, destroy countless lives and hamper development efforts. The human, social and economic costs demand from us all to strengthen our commitment to curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The brutal terrorist attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Al-Qaida, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, the Lord's Resistance Army and the Allied Democratic Forces, to mention but a few, remind us of the need to strengthen our resolve to address the scourge of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Given today's globalized and highly interconnected world, it is incumbent upon us all and the international community to collectively address the serious challenges facing disarmament and international security.

Mr. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation, our congratulations on your election to steer the proceedings of the First Committee at the seventieth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that your experience will lead to the hoped-for positive results.

My delegation welcomes the statements made by the representatives of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/70/PV.2).

We meet today at a time when many parts of the world are experiencing instability because of the

challenges being faced by the collective, multilateral security and disarmament system, in particular with regard to nuclear-disarmament mechanisms and non-proliferation, the most prominent being the failure of the 2015 Review Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the ongoing phenomenon of terrorism and the danger of weapon proliferation. We reiterate our firm position on disarmament issues, proceeding from our commitment to our responsibility for preserving international peace and security, as well as for supporting all endeavours designed to achieve disarmament in the world, in keeping with the principles of the United Nations and its message on the maintenance of international peace and security.

On that basis, Qatar has acceded to numerous major international conventions in the field of disarmament, in particular the NPT, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and other conventions in support of international efforts to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Since its inception, in 2004, the Qatari National Committee for the Prohibition of Weapons has been forwarding advice to the relevant governmental bodies on all matters relating to banning weapons, with a view to achieving the goals set out in the relevant international conventions to which we have acceded.

While we emphasize the important role undertaken by the First Committee, which is the multilateral deliberative body responsible for disarmament within the United Nations, we are concerned by its inability to fully discharge its tasks of disarmament and strengthening security. Recently it has not been able to achieve progress because of the absence of political will on the part of some States. That was clearly reflected in the NPT Review Conference held in May. The Conference failed to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, despite the considerable efforts deployed in the hope of achieving that goal. Among the most important reasons for political and security instability in the Middle East are the refusal by some States to join efforts for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and their refusal to accede to the NPT, as well as their refusal to implement comprehensive safeguards as a prerequisite to acceding to that Convention.

We emphasize that the peaceful use of nuclear energy, as set out in the NPT, is an inalienable right,

including the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Programmes on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy must be developed responsibly, however, with full guarantees and in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to enable the Agency to carry out full verification and ensure compliance with the standards of peace and security and non-proliferation, in particular as nuclear proliferation constitutes a considerable source of tension.

The spread of small arms and light weapons constitutes one of the gravest challenges facing the world in the area of disarmament. The illegal transfer of such weapons and their misuse kindles disputes that have destructive effects on civilians. All States, in particular States that manufacture such weapons, must establish stringent restrictions banning the proliferation of such weapons.

With regard to the peaceful uses of outer space, that region plays a pivotal role in achieving economic development. We therefore call upon the Conference on Disarmament to strengthen international cooperation on the use of outer space for peaceful uses, including the prohibition of any weapons in outer space or their use or the threat to use force against any space objects. We also call upon those States to take confidence-building measures to prevent outer space from becoming an area of conflict.

In conclusion, building a world characterized by stability and security and the rejection of violence should be our shared goal. We therefore call upon all Member States to demonstrate a sense of responsibility by fulfilling their disarmament-related obligations, in particular those related to nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We hope that the consultations now under way in the Committee will contribute to achieving the world's aspirations for peace, security, stability and economic prosperity.

Ms. Guitton (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee and wishes you every success in your important task.

The overriding objective of the First Committee must be to contribute to building a safer world. That is conceivable only on the basis of a shared understanding of the current security challenges. Yet we have to recognize that our security environment has become more unpredictable, complex and interdependent. This is a more unpredictable world, because the very

structure of security in Europe has been threatened with the annexation of Crimea and the crisis in Ukraine. It is a more complex and dangerous world when Da'esh advances in the territory of Iraq and Syria are challenging the very principles and values of our democratic societies, even in Europe. The resurgent threat of heinous terrorism was tragically experienced by France with the attacks in early 2015. This is an interdependent world, because the crises and the responses to them can no longer be confined to a single country or region. From Libya to Yemen and from the Sahelo-Saharan strip to Somalia, the rapid increase in radical extremism, the proliferation of trafficking and political crises are deeply destabilizing and are causing huge flows of refugees and migrants, in particular towards Europe.

In the face of such developments, we cannot lower our guard, nor can we fail to fulfil our obligations. Our determination to safeguard respect for international law as an indispensable foundation of our collective security must be unwavering. In that respect, the integrity of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and of all of the other international instruments for disarmament, arms control, including conventional arms, and non-proliferation cannot be called into question. We must engage to defend the values of democracy and human rights. Our efforts must continue to be guided by the Charter of the United Nations.

In order to meet our aspiration to achieve greater international security and more effective and representative multilateralism, we must be able to count on the determination of each of our Governments. Such forums of debate are essential and are represented by the First Committee, but the whole disarmament machinery, in particular the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, must also more generally be able to play its role fully. If consensus is not a goal in itself, it remains — and this is a fact — the crucial catalyst for the convergence of goals and actions among States.

With such clear concerns in mind, France remains fully committed to contributing to international peace and security. The continuation of the Minsk process must remain the main avenue for achieving a political solution to the Ukrainian crisis. France's support for the actions conducted by the coalition against Da'esh is strong, and we are continuing that support through the reinforcement of surveillance activities in Syria. Following on from interventions in Mali and the Central

African Republic, the operations conducted by France today in the region seek coordination with all the countries concerned and complement the actions of the European Union and the United Nations to consolidate sustainable conditions for stability and peace on the continent. Those are just some examples of France's broad commitment to the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations. Paris will also soon be hosting the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

With that same determination France has been fully involved in resolving proliferation crises, which saw significant developments in 2015. The agreement of the P5+1 and Iran reached in Vienna on 14 July represents important progress towards restoring the international community's confidence in the Iranian nuclear programme. France's commitment, with its P5+1 partners, to the long and complex negotiation contributed to defining a robust mechanism that should be implemented with vigilance.

With that renewed energy we also need to find a way out of the proliferation crisis in North Korea. That country has continued to develop its nuclear and ballistic programmes in violation of the resolutions of the Security Council. North Korea recently announced that it intended to conduct a space launch that would use ballistic technologies, which would thus be illicit. If North Korea refuses dialogue once again and opts for confrontation, that would represent another challenge to the international community, to which we must respond to with resolve and determination.

The issue of Syria's chemical activities remains to be clarified. There is another essential point here — the recurrent allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria remains a cause for major concern. The investigative and attribution mechanism that was established by the Security Council on 7 August should be based on the cooperation of all parties. To put a definitive end to the chemical threat, the complete and definitive dismantling of Syria's chemical programme must remain a priority, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

France is convinced that an ambitious vision of the challenges of nuclear disarmament must continue to be based on a gradual approach to the progress to be achieved. Only with the commitment of all and a shared awareness of current security challenges can we advance

towards a safer world. The growing polarization that is taking place from year to year in debates on nuclear disarmament is counterproductive. It is the consistency of acts with dialogue rather than simply the pressure of judgements that will enable us to proceed. For decades, the serious consequences of the use of nuclear weapons have been the subject of major studies. However, the specific nature of nuclear weapons compared to other weapons of mass destruction must be taken into account. Chemical and biological weapons cannot constitute the basis for a policy of deterrence. An exclusively legal approach would offer no realistic prospects for moving towards nuclear disarmament. We will not reach the top of the ladder by removing the rungs. Provided that such pitfalls are avoided and an inclusive approach is taken, the exchanges of the First Committee can count on France's openness to dialogue.

The lack of a final agreement at the recent NPT Review Conference should not lead us to forget the invaluable contribution of the three pillars of that Treaty to international security. It remains the essential basis for both nuclear disarmament and the promotion of civilian nuclear energy. It also remains our main safeguard against proliferation crises. Therefore, our support for the NPT must remain unquestionable. In that context, we remain committed to the implementation of nuclear disarmament pursuant to article VI of the NPT and to the prospect of general and complete disarmament and the 64-point action plan on the three pillars of the NPT adopted by consensus in 2010.

In his speech at Istres in 2015, the French President called on the other nuclear Powers to follow the example set by France with regard to both the transparency on its forces and installations and its disarmament commitments. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the launch of the negotiations on the Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices continue to be France's two main priorities. Consequently, with those new steps in mind, France has invested in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the fissile material cut-off treaty. It has welcomed the adoption of the Group's report (see A/70/81) by consensus and has submitted a draft treaty to its partners. We would like the First Committee to provide the framework for confirming the momentum created by those important contributions by encouraging further structured and in-depth

discussions on the fissile material cut-off treaty within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

Other important events have also received France's full attention, as the consequences of the transfer of unregulated weapons and illicit trafficking can be disastrous for the socioeconomic development of countries and for their political stability. For that reason, the goal of the full implementation and universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty is a core priority for France. The success of the first Conference of States Parties, to which my country actively contributed, was essential. It enabled us now to have the structures we need to work towards the Treaty's ambitious objectives. It also facilitates the participation of all States from all regions of the world, as well as the participation of civil society. France's constant concern has been this Treaty, because it involves all of us — importers and exporters, transit and destination countries. That is why it is crucial that it become the universal framework, and that is what France is calling for.

With regard to outer space today, the space sector is subject to an important increase in human activity, which has a spillover effect on the economy, research and innovation in a growing number of countries. If such peaceful activities are to flourish, we must maintain the security of space and, of course, avoid any risk of an arms race there. The response to such challenges demands that we take full account of the issues peculiar to space — the intertwined civilian and military sectors, the dangers of debris, and others. We believe that, if we are to get something done as quickly as possible, the most promising route continues to be an initiative aimed at producing a code of conduct on outer-space activities that establishes cross-cutting rules based on voluntary political commitments. We also hope that the joint meeting of the First and Fourth Committees, to be held on 22 October, will enable us to further explore the development of the confidence-building and transparency measures that are essential to ensuring security in space.

Lastly, we have a responsibility to anticipate the future, and that is the purpose of the French-led initiative on lethal autonomous weapon systems. The interest that discussion on such weapon systems has raised, both at the Government level and in civil society, and the expertise that has already been mobilized to identify all its implications are proof that the subject has merited consideration. We have to study the issue carefully and rigorously with the aim of ensuring as

broad a convergence of viewpoints as possible. The excellent work done in 2015 within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) showed that that Convention is fully capable of dealing with every aspect of that complex subject. In that context, and with the CCW Review Conference coming up in 2016, France will continue to contribute to efforts on that type of weapon system.

Given that it is crucial that we have a vision of a better world for future generations, its implementation must be rooted in the here-and-now, through concrete commitments and inclusive processes. France is determined to be fully and realistically engaged in the discussions that we have begun today in the First Committee.

The Chair: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to remind delegations to kindly limit their statements to 10 minutes when speaking in a national capacity.

Mr. Kang Myong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): On behalf of my delegation, Sir, I would first like to congratulate you warmly on your assumption of the Chair of the First Committee. I am confident that your rich experience and punctual, effective and efficient leadership will lead the Committee to success, and I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during your tenure. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and wish them every success in their work.

My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/70/PV.2).

The First Committee is a body entrusted with the very important task of addressing disarmament issues as they relate to international peace and security, including nuclear disarmament, conventional arms control and so forth. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea greatly values the work of the First Committee and is committed to assuming its responsibilities and role in accordance with the principles of fairness and impartiality. Every year in the General Assembly, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea voices its support for prioritizing nuclear disarmament and providing negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. We sponsor or support draft resolutions aimed at promoting international peace and security,

including those concerning the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea also upholds and supports the right of sovereign States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and to legitimately explore outer space, both of them major topics in the Committee.

Nuclear disarmament is vital to building a peaceful world, and what the international community means by that is the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons. That is, however, antithetical to the views of certain Powers, which ignore nuclear disarmament itself and focus only on non-proliferation. It is now a reality that about 20,000 nuclear weapons exist on our planet. It is also an undeniable reality that nuclear weapons are abused as a tool with which to threaten or blackmail sovereign States. It is that very reality that proves that nuclear disarmament should be our top priority in our quest to achieve world peace and the security and survival of humankind. The First Committee should therefore definitely make the total elimination of nuclear weapons the chief priority of its work on nuclear disarmament.

In today's international arena, the world's largest nuclear-weapon State continues to go ahead with its plans for nuclear attacks targeting specific countries, putting those plans into practice by staging constant war exercises on high alert. Such threatening and irresponsible actions are deeply worrying for the international community and have resulted in distrust and countervailing action by other States. The arbitrariness, high-handedness and double standards regarding disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, on the part of certain powerful countries are one of the major factors that have led to paralysis in the work of multilateral disarmament bodies such as the Conference on Disarmament. In that connection, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will, as always, make every effort to help to revitalize the work of the First Committee and the other multilateral disarmament bodies.

As is well known, the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is a product of the threat posed by the United States and by its blackmailing of and hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That issue would not exist if the United States had not threatened the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with its nuclear weapons. Those threats are not potential

or abstract in any way; they are practical and physical. Strategic nuclear bombers fly non-stop from the United States mainland or the island of Guam to the Korean peninsula and stage nuclear-bomb drills several times a year. Aircraft carriers and submarines carrying nuclear missiles constantly enter the waters around the Korean peninsula and take part in nuclear war exercises aimed at occupying Pyongyang.

The more than half a century of hostile United States policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has forced us to build our own nuclear weapons, and the ever-increasing nuclear threats from the United States have left us with no option for dealing with them besides further strengthening our nuclear deterrent. The grave reality on the Korean peninsula is proof of who is to blame for the setbacks to the global nuclear-disarmament process. In January, with the aim of ending the continuing vicious cycles of crisis on the Korean peninsula, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea proposed that the United States halt its joint military exercises with South Korea in return for the suspension of our nuclear tests. However, the United States rejected the proposal outright and closed forever all possibilities for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The United States is therefore no longer qualified to address the Korean peninsula denuclearization issue, having renounced the opportunity to discuss it further. The future response of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will be determined by whether the United States scraps its hostile policy towards our country or not.

The world recently witnessed the extremely dangerous military-political situation within which the army and the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea worked sincerely to avoid outright military conflict. The peaceful result was brought about by the noble ideal of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cherish peace and our national destiny. But for our restraint, the South Korean authorities would have had to learn the serious lesson that, if they continue to fabricate groundless cases for war, judge situations in a self-serving manner and provoke their opponents with unilateral actions, unnecessary tension and military conflict will be the only result.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea feels a sense of relief that a new atmosphere — one of improved north-south relations — is resulting from our joint efforts. We hope that the South Korean authorities

will contribute in practical ways to improving inter-Korean relations by actively engaging in sincerely implementing the agreement. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will make every effort to bring about an era of national prosperity and reunification as soon as possible, for that is the aspiration of the entire Korean nation.

Korea's reunification will be the fulfilment of the national desire and contribute to the peace and security of the Korean peninsula and North-East Asia, where the interests of the great Powers clash. From a promotion of international peace and security perspective, it can be said that the policy goal of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to achieve its national desire of reunification has some fundamental points in common with the mandate of the First Committee.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear deterrent is a reliable guarantee, for all intents and purposes, that the supreme interests of the country and the security of the nation will be defended and that regional peace and stability will be safeguarded in the face of attempts at aggression by outside forces. Our nuclear deterrent does not constitute a threat to non-nuclear-weapon States, nor to nuclear-weapon-free zones established in several regions of the world. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as a responsible nuclear-weapon State, will sincerely honour and carry out its obligations assumed before the international community.

The peaceful use of outer space is the legitimate right of all States. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will promote exchange and cooperation with international space organizations and with the space institutions of other countries. As a full-fledged satellite-launching State, it will also continue to launch application satellites needed for our economic development at the time and place of its choosing, while ensuring transparency in accordance with the relevant international norms and practices.

Mr. Mati (Italy): Mr. Chair, I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee and assure you of the Italian delegation's full support.

Italy aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/70/PV.2). I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Italy attaches great importance to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation as essential components of our foreign policy. We firmly believe that multilateralism and international cooperation are crucial to achieving effective and long-term results in the field of disarmament. Italy will therefore continue to be actively engaged in all relevant forums, particularly the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament (CD).

The disarmament community witnessed a landmark success last July, with the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the E3/EU+3 and Iran. That agreement proved that diplomacy works, and it constitutes an important milestone in the long-running efforts to reach a comprehensive, long-lasting and peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. We welcome the unanimous endorsement of the JCPOA by the Security Council and call on the international community to strongly support its implementation.

Italy welcomes the successful first Conference of the States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), held in Cancún, Mexico. We highly value the universalization and effective implementation of the ATT, which provides a robust international framework for the trade in conventional arms and will foster respect for human rights. Through its provisions on the prevention of gender-based violence, the Treaty has, for the first time, included a gender perspective and the concept of human security in the broader context of global security.

In the nuclear field, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. We call for its universalization and for the full implementation of its three mutually reinforcing pillars. We also underscore the indispensable role of the International Atomic Energy Agency and support its strengthening, including through universal adherence to comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols.

We deeply regret that consensus could not be reached at the ninth NPT Review Conference, but we trust that the efforts made to bridge different positions will not have been in vain. We must continue to work to achieve the objectives of the Treaty, including through the full implementation of the 2010 Action Plan.

Further major reductions in nuclear arsenals and their eventual elimination require our cooperation in addressing the security and humanitarian dimensions of nuclear weapons. Concern over the devastating impact of nuclear-weapon explosions on human beings and on the environment underpins our actions on disarmament and non-proliferation. The hard practical work needed to bring us closer to a world free of nuclear weapons must be continued, and centred not only on humanitarian considerations but also on security considerations. We are convinced that such action should focus on practical and effective measures.

We must simultaneously advance non-proliferation and disarmament as mutually reinforcing processes and create a more peaceful world. To that end, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remains a top priority. We urge all States whose ratification is essential for the Treaty's entry into force to sign or ratify it. In the meantime, we support a comprehensive moratorium on nuclear-weapons tests.

We reaffirm that it is of the utmost importance to preserve the primary role of the CD in multilateral disarmament negotiations. We reiterate our call for the early commencement within the CD of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material, which represents the next logical step for effective progress on nuclear disarmament. Italy welcomes the report (see A/70/81) of the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty, along with the other meaningful contributions derived from the substantive discussions on the topic held in the CD during the 2015 session. Italy strongly supports and is fully engaged with the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification as an innovative initiative involving both nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States.

We reaffirm our support for the 1995 NPT Review Conference's Resolution on the Middle East and the relevant practical steps, endorsed by the 2010 Review Conference, towards the convening of a conference on establishing a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, to be attended by all States of the region on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by them, as decided at the 2010 Review Conference. Such a zone is essential to global peace and security and the stability of the region, and we continue to call on all States concerned to act urgently and proactively to engage in the process.

Preserving a safe and secure space environment and the equitable and mutually acceptable peaceful use of outer space are top priorities. In line with the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities, we see value in pursuing political commitments, and we support the initiative led by the European Union for an international code of conduct for that area. We regret that the delegations gathered in New York in July were not able to start negotiations on a draft code, but we are confident that the elements that emerged from their debate will foster further constructive developments.

Italy currently chairs the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and reiterates its commitment to a world without chemical weapons. A year after the transfer operation at the port of Gioia Tauro in Italy, the removal and destruction of the declared Syrian stockpile of chemical weapons has been accomplished. Many uncertainties remain, however, with regard to the complete dismantling of Syria's chemical-weapons programme and the ongoing use of chlorine as a weapon against the civilian population, which we have firmly condemned. We therefore welcomed Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), which set up a joint investigative mechanism aimed at identifying the perpetrators of chemical attacks in Syria.

Italy strongly supports the goals of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Italian health and academic institutions have participated actively in international training and capacity-building initiatives on matters related to its implementation. With the Convention's eighth Review Conference fast approaching, we strongly favour a transparent and inclusive preparatory process aimed at consolidating our shared understanding of ways to strengthen it.

We are also fully committed to international efforts to address the humanitarian, socioeconomic and security effects of conventional weapons. We greatly value the Dubrovnik Political Declaration and Action Plan, which were the outcomes of the first Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We are actively promoting the full implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its annexed Protocols. We attach great importance to their universalization and national implementation, to full compliance with their provisions, and to developing

any potential synergies among them. As a firm believer in the role of international cooperation and assistance, we continue to support mine-action programmes.

This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. Italy supported its adoption from the very beginning and has developed a national action plan for implementing it. We are keenly aware of the importance of including gender-based approaches in disarmament processes and of ensuring the equal participation of women and men in decision-making and action on peace and security.

Before concluding, I would like to reaffirm the importance that we attach to strengthening the dialogue on disarmament topics with all the relevant actors from civil society. We note the fundamental contribution they make and look forward to their increased involvement in the disarmament machinery's activities.

Ms. Battungalag (Mongolia): I would like at the outset, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections and to assure you of Mongolia's full support and cooperation. We are confident that, under your able leadership, the Committee's work will have fruitful results.

The past 70 years have served to reaffirm the role of the United Nations in helping to ensure observance of the principles of international law and the maintenance of international peace and security. As current world affairs show, there can be no higher priority than the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mongolia welcomes the historic agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action reached between the EU3+3 and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 14 July, and believes that its successful implementation will provide the international community with the assurances it needs to help build confidence in the region. We also welcome the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, which is destined to be an important instrument contributing to the prevention of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

My delegation underscores the importance of resolution 69/58, entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament", which provides a pathway for advancing the goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We are hopeful that the full implementation of the

resolution, particularly through the start of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, can ensure tangible progress on the issue.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Like many Member States, Mongolia noted with regret that, despite every effort, the 2015 NPT Review Conference fell short of reaching consensus on a draft final document. Nevertheless, that should not prevent us from promoting peace and security, nor should it delay the full and effective implementation of all provisions of the Treaty.

Nearly 20 years have passed since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was opened for signature. Mongolia welcomes Angola's recent ratification of the Treaty. For Mongolia, the universalization of the Treaty is a vital step towards global nuclear disarmament. Each and every State should make it a priority to continue to work to promote the Treaty's prompt ratification by States listed in its annex 2. My delegation therefore welcomes the final declaration and measures to promote the entry into force of the Treaty adopted by the Article XIV Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force of the CTBT, held in New York on 29 September. The Provisional Technical Secretariat has met all the necessary requirements for launching a full-scale testing phase for the International Data Centre (IDC), part of the IDC's progressive commissioning plan, which will enable the Organization to act under its mandate as soon as the Treaty enters into force. With the Provisional Technical Secretariat making progress on the necessary infrastructure development for the verification regime, it will be up to the States parties to put their intentions into practice.

Mongolia shares the concerns about the lack of universality in the acceptance of the International Atomic Energy Agency's comprehensive safeguards agreement and additional protocol, as well as about the lack of progress in implementing the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, adopted at the NPT Review Conference 20 years ago. As a strong advocate of nuclear-weapon-free zones, Mongolia is hopeful that international efforts can help us to make progress in establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. We have always been a firm advocate of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and are working to help improve international peace and security by promoting nuclear-weapon-free status for that region.

Nuclear-weapon free zones have been proven to be an effective measure for regional non-proliferation and disarmament. Mongolia therefore continues to work to support nuclear-weapon-free zones. We should strengthen the existing zones and take measures to promote the establishment of new ones, including in the Middle East and North-East Asia.

Mongolia recognizes the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body for disarmament and looks forward to seeing earnest efforts to find a solution to its ongoing stalemate. We hope that all Conference members can demonstrate the political will that they will need for the Conference to be able to begin its substantive work. Given the situation, we believe that innovative approaches should be explored to make the resumption of meaningful disarmament negotiations possible.

Mongolia has always pursued a peaceful, open, multi-pillar foreign policy that is neutral in substance. Our de facto neutrality has been underpinned by our geographic location and history and by the development path we have embraced. That neutrality has become particularly relevant in the current geopolitical circumstances, prompting us to finally declare our permanently neutral status in the wake of a meeting of our National Security Council on 8 September. Our national laws and the international treaties to which Mongolia is a signatory are consistent with the principles of neutrality. Our permanently neutral status compels no substantive changes in our current foreign policy, but rather brings together, under one umbrella, all the elements of permanent neutrality set out in our Constitution and in a range of various separate laws and State policies.

As before, while developing balanced relations of equality with other countries, Mongolia will continue, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, to contribute to common efforts to resolve regional and global issues, including those aimed at strengthening democracy and ensuring human rights and freedoms. In that regard, my delegation will present to the Committee a draft resolution entitled "Permanent neutrality of Mongolia" under agenda item 91. The main purpose of the draft resolution is to seek the international community's support for, and recognition of, Mongolia's status. Proceeding from the premise that our permanently neutral status can help to strengthen peace, security and development in our region and

beyond, I trust that the draft resolution will enjoy Member States' broad support.

Mr. Hajnoczi (Austria): It is a pleasure to be able to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your assumption of your office and to assure you of the full support of my delegation.

Austria aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union earlier in the general debate (see A/C.1/70/PV.2) on a broad range of subjects, including the successful negotiations between the EU3+3 and Iran, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Arms Trade Treaty, the possibility of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and the use of chemical weapons in Syria. However, I would like to highlight Austria's national perspective on the following issues.

Nuclear weapons continue to pose an existential threat to humankind. On the seventieth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations and of the first use of those weapons of mass destruction, the international community and the global discourse on nuclear weapons are at a critical juncture on how to address this threat. On the one hand, recent geopolitical events and what we see as very disconcerting nuclear rhetoric have only underscored the urgency of nuclear disarmament. Disarmament efforts have fallen far behind expectations and lack credibility. States that continue to stress the importance of nuclear weapons for their own security, while insisting on their unacceptability for other States, risk damaging the credibility of the entire nuclear regime. In that context, we consider the long-term nuclear-weapon modernization programmes that are under way to be highly disturbing and incompatible with the object and purpose of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the disarmament obligations and commitments assumed by the international community.

On the other hand, the international focus on the humanitarian consequences and the risks of nuclear weapons is growing. The facts, findings and evidence presented in the course of the humanitarian initiatives of recent years have profoundly challenged the notion that nuclear weapons can be considered as a tool for providing security. Indeed, the opposite is the case. In the light of those findings, an increasing number of States view the arguments for retaining nuclear weapons as an anachronistic, high-risk and ultimately

irresponsible gamble based on an illusion of security and safety.

The growing momentum behind those conclusions is clearly shown by the three international conferences that have been held on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and by the overwhelming support for cross-regional statements on the issue, the most recent of which was delivered in April by Austria's Minister for Foreign Affairs on behalf of 159 States. As a consequence of the evidence, facts and findings, Austria, as host of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in December 2014, issued the so-called humanitarian pledge as an urgent call for efforts aimed at achieving nuclear disarmament and filling the legal gaps in the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. We are grateful and very encouraged that to date the number of countries that have formally endorsed this call for action has reached 119. Austria looks forward to working closely with all stakeholders in furthering this initiative to achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

Austria deeply regrets the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference this past spring to agree on a course of action commensurate with the sense of urgency about nuclear disarmament demonstrated by the humanitarian initiative. In order to further underscore the imperative for urgent progress, Austria, together with a number of sponsors, will introduce two draft resolutions for consideration by the First Committee. The first, entitled "Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons", is entirely based on the text of the joint statement delivered on behalf of 159 countries at the NPT Review Conference. We consider it necessary to raise the key concerns and arguments expressed in the humanitarian statement through a General Assembly resolution, with the aim of generating the broadest possible support.

Secondly, in order to create further momentum and support for the conclusions encapsulated in the humanitarian pledge, Austria and the other sponsors will introduce a draft resolution entitled "Humanitarian pledge for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons", which will also be entirely based on the text of the humanitarian pledge. We look forward to consultations and invite all delegations to support those draft resolutions. In addition, Austria is sponsoring, and would like to register its full support for, the draft resolutions entitled "Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations" and "Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world".

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is a major cause of harm to civilians in many countries. Civilian casualties from explosive weapons in populated areas amounted to more than 40,000 civilian deaths and injuries during last year alone, a figure that dramatically outweighed military casualties. That is an extremely grave humanitarian problem and a severe challenge to efforts to protect civilians in armed conflict as stipulated in international humanitarian law. It is not a problem that can be restricted to a limited number of conflict zones. The growing numbers of refugees currently leaving their war-torn home regions are testament to the problem. Many are desperate to find shelter abroad — including tens of thousands who have come to my country, Austria — precisely as a result of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and the lack of protection for civilian populations.

Recently, Austria and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs convened a meeting in Vienna of international experts on the problem, with representatives from approximately 20 States, the International Committee of the Red Cross and various United Nations agencies, as well as civil society. The meeting highlighted the importance of raising awareness of the worst aspects of the problem. Moreover, the participants expressed significant support for the Secretary-General's proposal that we start working on an international political declaration aimed at preventing harm to civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Another matter of concern for my country is the prospect of the development of lethal autonomous weapons systems. While that may seem to be a distant threat, technological innovation is moving fast. We risk crossing a very dangerous threshold. We should be very careful to make sure that the use of such weapon systems is consistent with ethical, political and legal imperatives. Austria therefore advocates a deepening and intensification of the ongoing international debate and the setting up of a group of governmental experts on the subject.

Finally, the difficult financial position of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the lack of predictable funding for the Institute threatens its very functioning. Austria would like to express its full support for UNIDIR and the important contribution that it has made to our work. We would like to encourage the First Committee to take action to

ensure UNIDIR's continued effective functioning and sustainability in the future.

Mr. Mwewa (Zambia): Zambia has the honour to congratulate you, Ambassador Karel van Oosterom, for having been elected as Chair of the First Committee at its historic seventieth session. My delegation assures you and other Bureau members of our commitment to the work of the Committee, and we shall render you maximum support during the deliberations.

Zambia aligns itself with the statements made by representatives on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/70/PV.2) on disarmament, international peace and security.

My delegation joins all global peace custodians in calling upon all the nuclear-armed States to scale down their investments in nuclear-weapons advancement. There is a need therefore to promote the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and for the political leadership to commit and show solidarity, as was done and agreed in connection with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

At this point, Zambia takes cognizance of, and extends its gratitude to, the President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session, Mr. Lykketoft, for his laudable intention to support Member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda's new commitment to action with regard to sustainable development, peace and security, human rights and good governance. The 2030 Agenda commitments can be achieved only through guaranteed comprehensive disarmament and international peace and security.

Zambia has always been a strong and committed advocate of general and complete disarmament. Zambia therefore reaffirms its commitment to the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon free world, considering the devastation that would be caused by any form of detonation of nuclear weapons and noting that there is no competent international capacity to address the resulting catastrophic humanitarian consequences. In that regard, Zambia welcomes the recent global initiative on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, which has brought much-needed energy and impetus to discussions on nuclear disarmament.

Zambia further associates itself with the pledge issued at the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons in December 2014 aimed at filling the legal gap in the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. Zambia recognizes the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for its contribution to global nuclear disarmament. In that regard, Zambia wishes to make use of this opportunity to welcome all Member States that have ratified the CTBT and urges the remaining States to do so, especially annex 2 States, whose signatures and ratifications are necessary for the entry into force of the Treaty.

The Zambian delegation is concerned about the continued manufacturing of, illicit trade in, and transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons — a scourge Zambia has not been spared. Zambia, being a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty, which it signed on 25 September 2013, was among the 40 States signatories to the Treaty that participated in the work of the first Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, held in Cancún, Mexico, from 24 to 27 August and attended by 120 States, including civil society. Zambia remains committed to ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty, which came into force on 24 December 2014, after all legal aspects had been fully interpreted. Zambia further supports the Arms Trade Treaty in establishing the legally adhered to international trade in conventional arms. My country also pledges to work with all States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty in preventing and eradicating illicit trade in conventional arms.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate my Government's commitment to, and solidarity with, global efforts aimed at complete disarmament in all aspects.

Mr. Emvula (Namibia): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at its seventieth session and to assure you of my delegation's full support. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their elections.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States (see A/C.1/70/PV.2).

The three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), namely, peaceful uses, non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, are essential instruments for strengthening international peace and security. Namibia wishes to stress that nuclear

disarmament should remain a priority on the agenda of the Committee. We once again renew our strong call upon the nuclear-weapon States to fully comply with their legal obligations and unequivocal undertakings to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons without further delay, in a transparent, irreversible and internationally verifiable manner.

It is essential that all non-nuclear-weapon States be provided with universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding assurances by all the nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. Improving or modernizing existing nuclear weapons, including developing new types, contradicts the objective of achieving nuclear disarmament. Like many other States parties to the NPT, Namibia regrets the failure of the recent ninth NPT Review Conference to reach consensus on the draft outcome document, despite the efforts made by many delegations.

Namibia remains a committed signatory to the Pelindaba Treaty of 1996, which provides a shield for Africa by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting the testing of such destructive weapons on the continent, which is the only nuclear-free-zone region. In the same vein, Namibia joins those who are calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and expresses concern over the fact that the commitments and obligations of the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference regarding the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East have not been implemented.

Namibia welcomes the accession of the State of Palestine to the NPT as its 191st State party. Likewise, Namibia welcomes the successful conclusion of nuclear negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the EU3+3, which resulted in the finalization of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on 14 July 2015. With regard to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Namibia believes that it is important to achieve universal adherence, which will result in the early entry into force of the CTBT. The CTBT is an instrument for halting the further development or proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament. Accordingly, we welcome the convening of the ninth Ministerial Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, held on 29 September in New York, and commend the

ratification of the Treaty by the Republic of Angola. We urge the remaining annex 2 countries to sign and ratify the CTBT.

We reaffirm the importance of humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons and in promoting the goal of nuclear disarmament. We therefore welcome the growing emphasis on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. In that context, we reiterate the need for all States, at all times, to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law. Any use of nuclear weapons is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and a crime against humanity. The total elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again is the only unqualified assurance against the catastrophic humanitarian consequences arising from the use of such weapons. The principal responsibility for nuclear safety rests with individual States, and therefore the responsibility for nuclear security within a State rests entirely with that State. Multilateral norms, guidelines and rules on nuclear security should be pursued within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It is our conviction that measures and initiatives aimed at strengthening nuclear safety and nuclear security must not be used as a pretext to deny or restrict the inalienable right of developing countries to develop research into and the production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Finally, we wish to highlight that multilateral disarmament negotiations will achieve tangible results only if there is genuine and sincere political will to support the process.

Ms. García Moyano (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that Uruguay takes the floor in the First Committee, we would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections. We wish you every success in your work and assure you of our delegation's full support.

Uruguay aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/C.1/70/PV.4).

Uruguay is highly committed to the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and against their destabilizing build-up and misuse. Conventional weapons are the true weapons of mass destruction in the

region of Latin America and the Caribbean, threatening civilians, primarily women and children.

Uruguay is convinced that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a key step towards increasingly responsible international rules on and trade in conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons and their parts, components and ammunition. In addition, regulating such trade will have major consequences on armed conflicts, primarily for civilian victims of armed violence, especially women and children, and will promote peace and security, thereby reducing the transfer of weapons to conflict areas. Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the main objective of the ATT, which is to save lives. To do that, we must join forces and exert our best efforts to prevent attacks and violence against civilians and the increasing number of victims among them. Our country has continued to make every effort to achieve the full implementation of the ATT at the national level, including in the preparations for and holding of the first Conference of States Parties, aimed at achieving the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty.

We believe that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is an instrument of vital importance and an international benchmark for advancing in the fight against the illicit trafficking of such weapons. We value the adoption of a final document by consensus at the fifth Biennial Meeting of States, held last year, to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, as well as the holding of the second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms this year.

However, the fact that ammunition was not included in the implementation review of the Programme of Action renders the experts' analysis incomplete. Uruguay will continue to work to include ammunition in that analysis, as well as language relating to border control. Furthermore, we must strengthen cooperation among States aimed at combating the illicit trade in small arms and strengthen existing synergies between the Programme of Action and the Treaty, which are undeniable. We also stress the importance of the adoption of the most recent Security Council resolution on small arms, which seeks to prevent the illicit trafficking and destabilizing effect from the storage and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

As a non-nuclear-weapon State, Uruguay is committed to strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It supports the bolstering of multilateralism in its efforts to achieve universal and complete disarmament and the strengthening of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Uruguay's commitment to the multilateral regulatory framework is part of our foreign policy, which favours and promotes the need for further progress in universal, multilateral, non-discriminatory and transparent negotiations among all countries, regardless of their size and power, in order to achieve general and complete disarmament under strict international control. In that regard, we reiterate the importance of the NPT as the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We regret the lack of results at the NPT Review Conference held earlier this year, which ended without a final document after one month of deliberations. We will continue working to achieve balance among the three pillars of the Treaty, that is, disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It will require greater commitment and political will, the implementation of the instruments that complement the NPT, and negotiations aimed at facilitating the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons must be started.

The International Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Oslo, Nayarit and recently in Vienna, have shown us our limitations in terms of defending or protecting ourselves against the intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons. The humanitarian consequences of the destruction caused by such weapons must be expressly and urgently prohibited. We therefore advocate the fulfilment and implementation of the commitments agreed under the NPT.

Uruguay welcomed the announcement, last July, of the historic agreement reached between Iran and the P5+1 countries with regard to the Iranian nuclear programme. Our country, recognizing once again the right of all States with the relevant capacity to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, congratulates all the parties concerned for their firm commitment to reaching a comprehensive and satisfactory agreement. We also call for full respect for, and compliance with, the conditions set out in the agreement. The adoption and implementation of the agreement should help to reduce what has been a significant source of tension

at the international level and to encourage peace and stability at the regional and international levels.

Uruguay was one of the countries that actively participated in the development of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and, as such, fully supports the Provisional Technical Secretariat needed for the Treaty's implementation and for ensuring the integrity of the system, in particular the International Monitoring System. We wish to emphasize once again the critical importance of a timely entry into force of the Treaty. For that reason, we urge the States listed in annex 2 of the Treaty to ratify it as soon as possible. We also urge all States of the international community to maintain their moratoriums on nuclear testing and the testing of other explosive devices of that nature.

With regard to pending negotiations, we call on the Conference on Disarmament to start, without further delay, negotiations on a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material intended for the fabrication of nuclear weapons. We also urge the commencement, without any conditions, of negotiations on a legally binding agreement on negative security assurances. That agreement is vital to ensure that non-nuclear-weapon States do not suffer the catastrophic consequences of the use or threat of use of such weapons by the nuclear Powers.

Uruguay has consistently promoted the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones worldwide. As an active member of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone on the planet, that is to say, a member of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Uruguay urges recognition of all such agreements and respect for their territorial bodies. Once again, we call upon the nuclear-weapon States and any other State mentioned in the relevant protocols to the treaties establishing such zones that have not yet signed or ratified those protocols to do so as soon as possible. At the same time, we call for the amendment or withdrawal without conditions of unilateral reservations or interpretations formulated by the nuclear-weapon States, which compromise the nuclear-weapon-free status of a zone. Furthermore, Uruguay deplores the continued failure to hold a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the resolution on the subject adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. In that regard, we urge all parties to hold the long-expected conference on the establishment of a

nuclear-weapon-free Middle East as soon as possible in order to help bring stability and peace to that region.

Strengthening a general and complete disarmament regime under strict and effective international control also requires the effective implementation of those conventions that seek to prohibit and eliminate other weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, we reiterate that, for Uruguay, the total elimination of chemical and biological weapons is a disarmament and non-proliferation priority. That is why our country has been striving for the prompt universalization of the Chemical Weapon Convention. In that regard, we urge all States in possession of such weapons to comply with the obligations stipulated by the Convention and to destroy their arsenals.

Uruguay reiterates the importance of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) in that regard and the decision on that topic of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, instruments that provide for the establishment of a joint mission and other procedures for the destruction of the chemical-weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) seeks to identify, to the greatest extent feasible, those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Uruguay recognizes the value of the Conference on Disarmament as a genuine multilateral forum for the international community to discuss disarmament, as well as the role it plays in negotiations on priority disarmament issues. However, the Conference has been unable to implement a programme of work that meets the aspirations and needs of the international community. In that regard, Uruguay believes that one of the possible ways to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament is by broadening its membership to those States that have expressed a legitimate interest in being part of that body. Our country has formally voiced its desire to join the Conference on Disarmament, as have other States that have been calling, since 1982, for the expansion of the body's membership.

It is our responsibility to exhaust all the means available to further advance the goal of achieving disarmament and stopping proliferation, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the supreme body entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Sir, since this is the first time I take the floor in a formal meeting of the First Committee, let me congratulate you on the assumption of your role and assure you of my delegation's full support.

Let me also align myself with the statement made earlier during this debate on behalf of the European Union and its member States (see A/C.1/70/PV.2).

The United Kingdom is proud to have been part of the United Nations since it began. We are honoured that the first General Assembly meeting, 70 years ago, was held in London. Seventy years on, in his statement during the high-level segment that marked the beginning of this session, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom observed that

“Britain has always believed that the stability we seek in relations between nations is best realized through the framework of laws, norms and institutions that together constitute the rules-based international system that was developed after the Second World War, with the Charter of the United Nations at its heart.” (*A/70/PV.18, p.20*)

That framework of laws, norms and institutions is as vital to the conduct of the issues dealt with by the First Committee as it is to the work of any other United Nations body. It has underpinned more than a decade of tough negotiations on the Iran nuclear issue, which concluded this year on 14 July when the United Kingdom, alongside our E3+3 partners, agreed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, which will mean strict limits on and inspections of Iran's nuclear programme. Under the agreement, Iran will grant the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) unprecedented access to verify adherence to the constraints placed on its nuclear programme, including through implementation of the Additional Protocol to Iran's Safeguards Agreement. That Plan of Action is underpinned by the principles of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); it will give the international community confidence that Iran's nuclear programme is, and will remain, exclusively peaceful. Our focus is now on the swift and full implementation of the Plan of Action.

That framework of laws, norms and institutions, as it applies to the issues dealt with by this Committee, has matured over time and is durable. The NPT remains vitally important to the international community. It has

played an unparalleled role in curtailing the nuclear arms race, and it continues to play a role in keeping the world safe. It is disappointing that this year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons narrowly missed achieving consensus on a final document, despite the best efforts of many, ours not least among them.

But the lack of consensus this year does not undermine the Treaty, nor does it change States' obligations under it. The Action Plan agreed at the 2010 Review Conference provides a comprehensive road map for all NPT States to take forward activity on disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear technology. It remains valid, as do the agreements from 2000 and 1995. Just on the disarmament pillar, the 2010-2015 review cycle witnessed some important developments. There was an unprecedented level of transparency between the nuclear-weapon States, and between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States. The number of deployed nuclear weapons has continued to decrease. The United Kingdom reduced the number of operationally available warheads to no more than 120. The United Kingdom will continue to pursue such actions, working closely with our partners in the NPT.

While we regret that a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery has not been convened, we have no doubt that the 1995 NPT Review Conference resolution on the Middle East remains valid until its goals and objectives are achieved. We are absolutely committed to the establishment of such a zone in line with the 1995 resolution and the steps agreed at the 2010 Conference. Indeed, it is because of the seriousness with which we view our responsibilities as a sponsor of the 1995 resolution that we were unable to join the consensus at this year's NPT Review Conference. To have a meaningful chance of success, any process leading to the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East must be based on arrangements freely arrived at by all States of the region. We stand ready to assist further in such a process in any way we can and, to that end, will continue to liaise formally and informally with the sponsors and the States of the region.

In several important areas, the framework of laws, norms and institutions continues to be strengthened. We are pleased that the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has almost achieved universality. We welcome

the recent accessions of Burma and Angola, and look forward to welcoming South Sudan to the Convention in the near future. We urge the three remaining States Members of the United Nations that have not yet taken the positive decision to join the Convention — the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt and Israel — to do so without further delay. Further strengthening of the Convention will come through full and effective national implementation and the maintenance of the credibility of the Convention's verification regime.

Putting the Arms Trade Treaty into action is an important step forward, adding to the framework of laws and norms on conventional weapons. The first Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty was successful in laying the foundations for effective operational support to the Treaty. Working with partners, our priorities should now be two-fold: securing the effective implementation of the Treaty by States parties and continuing our efforts to promote its universalization. The Treaty's strength depends upon the number of States parties that have ratified or acceded to the Treaty and embedded the requirements of the Treaty into their national export-control processes.

The United Kingdom strongly supports the Biological Weapons Convention. We believe it is in all our interests to ensure that the Convention remains relevant and effective. The Convention's Review Conference in November 2016 will provide an important opportunity for us to improve confidence in States parties' compliance. We believe that, in order to ensure a productive Review Conference, we must make even more use of the Preparatory Committee process next year, focusing on matters of substance in addition to the normal administrative matters.

The United Kingdom is committed to improving the security of nuclear and radioactive materials. We work closely with international partners, both bilaterally and through international organizations, such as the United Nations and the IAEA, to secure materials and weapons of mass destruction. Our Global Threat Reduction Programme provided over £9 million to the IAEA Nuclear Security Fund between April 2013 and March 2015, and we are pleased to have played a key role in the final removal of highly enriched uranium from Uzbekistan last month. Looking ahead, we see the fourth Nuclear Security Summit, to be held in April 2016, and the IAEA International Conference on Nuclear

Security, in December 2016, as key opportunities to strengthen international cooperation in that area.

Key States whose nuclear facilities are not all under safeguards, the United Kingdom among them, have declared moratoriums on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The United Kingdom sees the start and early conclusion of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of such fissile material as an essential step on any route to nuclear disarmament; and the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, in the Conference on Disarmament, further to the adoption of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, is a priority for us, as well. In that regard, we are pleased that the Group of Government Experts established on that issue was able to produce a substantive report (see A/70/81). We recommend the report to the General Assembly.

We should not forget that there are some significant challenges to the framework of laws, norms and institutions that underpin our work. The United Kingdom condemns the continued development by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes in direct violation of Security Council resolutions, as well as its refusal to comply with international laws and norms. It is essential that all States Members of the United Nations continue to work to prevent the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from acquiring and developing nuclear weapons, and ensure the robust implementation of the United Nations sanctions regimes in order to control access by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to proliferation-sensitive material and to prevent it from exporting arms and technology. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must abide by its obligations under the Security Council resolutions and the NPT. That includes not conducting further nuclear tests, or tests involving ballistic-missile technologies.

Reports of the ongoing use of chemical weapons in Syria and Iraq are appalling. The United Kingdom condemns any use of chemical weapons, by anyone, anywhere. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), in March, there have been over 90 allegations of chemical-weapon use in Syria, and the overwhelming majority of those allegations are against the Al-Assad regime. All credible allegations must be investigated, and the perpetrators must be held accountable. We hope that the rapid implementation of the impartial Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-United Nations

Joint Investigative Mechanism into allegations of chemical-weapons use in Syria will help to address that problem. It is vitally important that, having created the Mechanism, States now move to fund it. The United Kingdom is pleased to contribute an immediate cash injection of £150,000.

While we welcome the progress made on the destruction of Syria's declared chemical-weapons programme, we remain concerned about outstanding issues highlighted by the OPCW in the October report of its Declaration Assessment Team on Syria's declaration under the CWC. The lack of a clear explanation for enormous quantities of schedule 1 chemicals and precursors, and the failure of the Government of Syria to provide satisfactory answers to questions about samples, research facilities, and its chemical-weapons programme, as required by the CWC, must not go unchallenged. The Government of Syria must comply with its obligations under the CWC, including offering full transparency, so that the international community can have confidence in the integrity of its statements and believe that Syria has fully declared its programme and that all the relevant materials have been destroyed.

As new issues emerge, we should consider how the framework of laws, norms and institutions can be applied to them. The United Kingdom strongly believes that, in order to ensure that the outer space environment is maintained for the benefit of all humankind, nations must work to extend the rules-based international system to space. We are disappointed that countries could not enter into negotiations when they met in New York in July, although the meeting did serve as a useful exchange on some of the key principles for norms of behaviour that help preserve outer space for the global common good. It was apparent that all present agreed on the need for space-faring nations, and those who aspire to become space-faring nations, to move forward on transparency and confidence-building measures in space, covering both civilian and military activity. The United Kingdom will continue to support and work towards that objective and encourages other nations to support that goal for the benefit of all.

The United Kingdom welcomes the report (see A/68/98) of the recent Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. It reaffirms that international law is applicable in cyberspace. States' adherence to international law, in particular their obligations under the Charter of the

United Nations, is an essential framework for their actions in their use of information and communication technologies. The references both to the inherent right of States to self-defence, as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, and to the principles of necessity, proportionality, humanity and distinction, as enshrined in international humanitarian law, provide important clarity on the legal rights and responsibilities of States. We also welcome the report's recommendations on norms of responsible State behaviour and confidence-building measures. Voluntary, non-binding norms can strengthen international security by establishing clear expectations and standards for State activity in cyberspace. We welcome, too, the recognition of the role of capacity-building in strengthening international cybersecurity.

The framework of laws, norms and institutions that together constitute the rules-based international system has endured and become stronger over the past 70 years, evolving to face new challenges in a process that has seen periods of slow progress and periods of rapid progress, but progress nonetheless. Those are 70 years in which war on the scale that characterized the preceding 70 years has not been repeated. The system has been challenged in the past, and it is being challenged now. There is no denying the increased uncertainty that exists in today's global security environment. In the face of that uncertainty, we firmly believe that the stability we seek in the relations among nations is best realized through the rules-based international system. Working together through the system, patiently and methodically, we can ensure that the hard-won gains of the past 70 years are built upon, not squandered.

The Chair: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I wish to remind delegations to kindly limit their interventions to 10 minutes when speaking in their national capacity.

Mr. Alwan (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): As this is the first time we take the floor in the First Committee, I am pleased, at the outset, to extend our congratulations to you, Mr. Chair, on your chairmanship of the First Committee, and to the other members of the Bureau. We express our thanks and gratitude to your predecessor and to the members of the Bureau at the previous session. We are quite confident that your diplomatic skills and expertise will contribute to the success of our meetings. Rest assured of my delegation's support for you in guiding the Committee towards the positive outcome to which we aspire: achieving a secure and stable world.

My delegation endorses the statements made by the representative of Oman, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/70/PV.2).

My country's Government firmly believes that we are all responsible for respecting and implementing international arrangements, conventions and treaties related to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, including resolutions adopted by the Security Council, in particular those relating to non-proliferation and preventing the transfer of all types of weapons to terrorist groups. In that connection, at the same time as we are holding meetings in the First Committee, my country, Iraq, on behalf of the rest of the world, is waging a fierce war against the mightiest forces of international terrorism embodied in Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. That requires a decisive and strong commitment by all members of the international community to carry out their obligations under all disarmament instruments and treaties, in particular those relating to preventing the delivery of weapons to terrorist groups.

By the same token, Iraq fully believes that the concept of international peace and security has become part and parcel of international conventions and instruments relating to disarmament. My country insisted on incorporating those tenets in article 9 E of its permanent Constitution, on preventing the acquisition, development and use of all types of weapons of mass destruction. That leads me to respond to a statement made by a delegation that continues to level accusations with regard to the importance of implementing disarmament-related obligations, at a time when that delegation is not a party to disarmament conventions, in particular international instruments related to weapons of mass destruction. That renders the territories under the control of that entity a source for transferring prohibited weapons to terrorist groups, as it does not accede to those conventions, nor does it implement the obligations set out therein.

My delegation would like to underscore the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. By the same token, we would like to assert that the vital cornerstone of the Treaty is the universal nuclear-disarmament regime and the need for the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations

under article VI of the Treaty. The Government of Iraq expresses its disappointment at the breakdown of the consensus on the draft outcome document of the ninth NPT Review Conference, held earlier this year. That will reflect negatively on the Treaty and its credibility.

The failure of the Review Conference during the current delicate and critical phase being experienced by the world will adversely affect not only the Treaty and its credibility in general, but also especially the Middle East region, which is witnessing unprecedented tension, in particular with the failure of international efforts to convene a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in December 2012. That constitutes a shirking of the obligations of the outcome document of the 2010 Review Conference. Consequently, Iraq calls for the speedy and urgent implementation of the 1995 NPT Review Conference's resolution on the Middle East and the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, in the light of an integrated and comprehensive regional vision that seeks to avoid double standards and selectivity. By the same token, my delegation stresses the need to implement Security Council resolution 487 (1981), which, in its paragraph 5, calls upon Israel urgently to place all its nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In the current international environment, the international community faces a decisive and delicate situation that requires us to cooperate and redouble our efforts and demonstrate sincere political will to limit the indiscriminate proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and to prevent the illegal trafficking in such weapons, which are no different from weapons of mass destruction in their catastrophic consequences; indeed, they are more lethal and more harmful. In that connection, Iraq emphasizes the great importance of implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as extending assistance and transferring technology to developing countries, including my country, Iraq. That will enhance the ability of Member States to combat the numerous threats they face.

In the light of increasing regional crises and terrorist threats, as well as the exacerbation of the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction, the Conference on Disarmament is considered the sole multilateral deliberative forum on the matter. For almost 19 years,

the Conference has been unable to fulfil its role with regard to the negotiation of disarmament treaties. We are therefore duty-bound to double our efforts to arrive at an agreement on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that satisfies all the requirements of Member States and enables us to achieve the goals to which we aspire in the field of disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, in the interest of international peace and security.

The proliferation of anti-personnel landmines and the remnants of war, be they explosives or cluster munitions, is a matter of great importance, given their disastrous impact on economic development and the environment. It is well known to all that Iraq is one of the world's foremost victims with regard to the presence of such mines. Approximately 25 million mines are planted in various parts of Iraq, which adversely and gravely affect our citizens, killing and maiming many, preventing people from accessing basic services, and impeding their return to their places of residence. Iraq is overburdened by this complex problem, owing to the actions of terrorist groups, such as Da'esh, which plant mines over the wide expanses under their control in order to prevent the Iraqi forces from liberating those areas. Therefore, my Government, while it thanks all States and parties that have extended assistance and support to Iraq, emphasizes the dire need of our national institutions for further support and assistance from the international community in order to get rid of the scourge of those lethal weapons, which adversely affect the environment, the economy and individuals.

Iraq has taken a number of positive steps with regard to conventional weapons, including most recently our accession to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, as well as its five Additional Protocols. In accordance with our obligations under the Convention, last year my Government submitted two relevant transparent reports under Protocols II and V.

While we express our concern about the disastrous consequences that would result from any nuclear explosion, be it intentional or accidental, we welcome the efforts made to resuscitate international discussions, including the three Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Norway, Mexico and Austria. In that connection, Iraq has joined the

Austrian pledge along with 159 other countries. That illustrates the huge support that the matter enjoys.

In conclusion, we reiterate our hope for the success of the Committee in a manner that satisfies the needs and concerns of all.

The Chair: Before wrapping up, I must remind delegations to kindly limit their interventions to 10 minutes when speaking in their national capacity.

Several representatives have requested to speak in the exercise the right of reply. In that context, may I remind all delegations of the time limits, with an eye to the availability of interpretation.

Mr. Alokly (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Sir, for giving me the floor to exercise my right of reply with regard to a paragraph in the statement made yesterday by the representative of Costa Rica. In her statement, the representative said,

“Costa Rica also expresses its concern with respect to the recent use of cluster munitions in various parts of the world.” (*A/C.1/70/PV.4, p. 22*)

The representative then went on to say that some countries, including Libya, had used cluster munitions. I would like to affirm that Libya has never had cluster munitions.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In her statement, the representative of Ukraine made the usual fabricated comments with regard to Russia, which, as everyone here understands, we cannot let pass without a response.

We recall that, as a result of the anti-constitutional armed uprising in Kyiv, Ukraine lost sovereignty over a part of its territory. After the referendum in Crimea and its voluntary accession to Russia on the basis of an international treaty, the peninsula became an integral part of the Russian Federation. Accordingly, bilateral agreements, including the one to which the representative of Ukraine referred, ceased to be in force, which is standard international practice. Therefore, the claims of its violation by our side do not correspond to reality, to put it mildly. An attempt to reject the right of a nuclear Power to put weapons on its territory, including nuclear weapons, looks absurd and does not require any comments.

With regard to Russia's alleged aggression in Donbas, I wish to explain that Donetsk and Luhansk are the regions we are talking about in this case. We

can only confirm that no evidence in support of the unsubstantiated comments made by the representative of Ukraine has been given, nor has it ever been given, even though we have asked for such confirmation time and again. No specifics have been provided on the transfer of conventional weapons to Donetsk and Luhansk either. We are quite familiar with the situation because there are accusations, but there is no proof. What Russia is really providing to those regions in the eastern part of Ukraine, as well as in other parts, is natural gas, which is provided at a discounted price. What is Kyiv's response? Instead of moving to a political process and direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk, the Ukrainian armed forces bomb and shell towns and villages. The Ukrainian representative said that 6,000 civilians had died, and the vast majority of them were victims from Donbas.

On the explosive remnants of war in eastern Ukraine, they are mostly unexploded devices from the Ukrainian army.

We could spend a long time going into the individual elements of the Ukrainian statement but, for the sake of time, we will refrain from doing so. We would just add that now the main objective is to fulfil the Minsk agreements. Those agreements were recently approved at the Normandy format summit and are the only means of guaranteeing peace in the Ukrainian territory, which is both in Russia's interests and, naturally, in the interests of our neighbour.

Mr. Kang Myong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation takes the floor to exercise its right of reply to the statements made by the delegations of Canada, France and United Kingdom. Those delegations regard the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's possession of nuclear weapons as the major factor in the mounting tensions on the Korean peninsula. Actually, as my delegation made clear in its general statement earlier, the possession of nuclear weapons was not its first choice. If the United States had not threatened the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with its nuclear weapons, the nuclear issue would not have been created on the Korean peninsula in the first place.

Since 2013, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has maintained the strategy of simultaneously developing the national economy as well as nuclear arms, thereby maintaining a peaceful environment thanks to our powerful nuclear deterrent and

accelerating economic development and the improvement in people's livelihoods. That is what the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's two-front strategy is all about. In the past, some countries took issue with our strategy, believing that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was developing its nuclear capacity for no other reason than to bully others or to use that capacity as a bargaining chip. Today countries have come to understand that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had no other choice, given the prevailing realities on the Korean peninsula; and that it was the right choice.

The nuclear deterrent force of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a reliable guarantee, for all its intents and purposes, for defending the supreme interests of the country and security of the nation, as well as for safeguarding regional peace, security and stability in the face of attempts at aggression by foreign forces. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as a responsible nuclear-weapon State, will sincerely honour and carry out its obligations.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor, but I need to respond to the comments made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

First and foremost, the United States has not threatened North Korea with nuclear weapons. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea needs to stop its bombastic rhetoric and to begin to implement its denuclearization obligations. Frankly, until North Korea takes those necessary steps, the international community will continue to demand that North Korea implement its obligations.

Mr. Kang Myong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I will be very brief. The United States has been threatening the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with nuclear weapons since the first days of the founding of our Republic. Every year, the United States and South Korea stage joint military exercises on the Korean peninsula. Those exercises have gone much too far, and their provocative nature hints at the danger of war. The recent military exercises have focused on landings, aerial strikes and commando operations for occupying Pyongyang. What is the real intention behind staging ever-more offensive and provocative war exercises, the largest in the world, on the Korean peninsula, more than a quarter of a century after the end of the Cold War? Many people have

noted that the war exercises have expanded in scope and intensity to coincide with this year's adoption by the United States Administration of the Asia-Pacific Rebalance strategy. It is good for dialogue and negotiations to be held regularly and on an annual basis, but it would be extremely dangerous to conduct hostile military exercises annually and on a regular basis on the Korean peninsula.

The Chair: I apologize on behalf of the interpreters, but they have to leave now.

Mr. Wood (United States): I apologize for taking the floor, but I need to respond to the charges from the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

First of all, the exercises that we have conducted in the past with the Republic of Korea are not a threat to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We have made sure that the international community was aware of those exercises and their scope. Again, those exercises were not a threat to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. On the contrary, it is the actions and behaviour of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that pose a threat to peace and stability in that region.

My last point, which I should have mentioned earlier, is — and I want to be clear about this — that the United States does not recognize the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a nuclear-weapon State.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.