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Chair: Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda items 52 (b) and 90 to 106 (continued)

Action on all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair: The Committee will continue to take action on the remaining draft resolution, listed in informal paper No. 5 as document A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, under cluster 2, “Other weapons of mass destruction”.

I now call on delegations wishing to take the floor to make general statements on cluster 2, “Other weapons of mass destruction”. Delegations are reminded that general statements are limited to five minutes.

Mr. Broilo (Poland): I am taking the floor to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”, which Poland, as the sole sponsor, submits to the First Committee every year.

For years, this text has contributed to ensuring international peace and security and enhancing the chemical-weapon non-proliferation regime, which is based on the Convention and its implementing body, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Despite the variety of complex issues, in the past the resolution has been able to gain unanimous international support. Regrettably, last year it lost its consensus-based nature. In the current situation, Poland strongly believes that because the Convention

faces serious challenges, the international community needs now more than ever a strong and clear message of support for the comprehensive implementation of the Convention, under all its pillars.

As the sole sponsor of the draft resolution, Poland outlined the factual and accurate current state of the implementation of the Convention in recent months. The draft resolution commends OPCW efforts on fundamental issues, such as universality, progress on the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles, in particular in Russia, national implementation, verification, the risks posed by the threat of use of chemical weapons by non-State actors, including terrorists, and last but not least, international cooperation. It also reflects the ongoing work on cases pertaining to the use of chemical weapons in Syria within the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), unanimously established by the Security Council in 2015.

The draft resolution could not omit those developments, as they undermine the fundamental international norm against the use of chemical weapons, the bedrock of the Convention, 20 years after its entry into force. Since the First Committee last addressed this draft text, we have witnessed the further use of chemical weapons despite our general condemnation and indignation and the treaty provisions in force. In the debate on other weapons of mass destruction earlier this month, we stressed very clearly that the situation is evolving and that we will not cease our efforts to address it, as and if necessary.

The amendment introduced to A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1 reflects that approach, taking due account of

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the most recent report of the JIM (S/2017/904) and its conclusions, bearing in mind the updated language on earlier conclusions of the Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. The First Committee should address the issue in its entirety because it involves the credibility of the international community and its representatives. Forging a common understanding on the issue of the use of chemical weapons in Syria proved extremely challenging. Poland did its utmost to address the dynamic and changeable situation in a balanced and adequate manner. The end result before the Committee is an open and transparent product, with a meaningful process. In that regard, we call on all members of the Committee to take a positive position on the draft resolution.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Government of Syria rejects any use of chemical weapons or weapons of mass destruction as unacceptable, immoral and unjustifiable anywhere, in any circumstances and for any reason. My country has fulfilled all its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention since it acceded to the Convention. The Syrian Arab Republic registered an unprecedented achievement by irreversibly eliminating its chemical weapons in record time. That feat was confirmed by the report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Mission for the Elimination of the Chemical Weapons Programme of the Syrian Arab Republic (S/2014/444), submitted to the Security Council in June 2014.

Since the end of the Second World War, the United States has used every possible means to delay the elimination of its own toxic chemical weapons. We reiterate our rejection of the false accusations and allegations about the Syrian Arab Republic's use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun or any other Syrian city or village. We reiterate that the Syrian army has no chemical weapons whatsoever and has never used them in collusion with armed elements or other handlers in their attempts to destroy the country — and that is even in the bloodiest of battles, because we simply do not possess such weapons.

Syria also reiterates that terrorist groups and their handlers continue to fabricate crimes. In recent years the Syrian Arab Republic has provided the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Security Council and other United Nations bodies with detailed information about the fact that terrorist groups have brought toxic chemicals into Syria, including Idlib,

from neighbouring countries, in particular Turkey, for their use in Khan Shaykhun and other locations.

Within the framework of cooperation between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, on 11 April the Syrian national committee on fulfilling Syria's commitments regarding the prohibition of chemical weapons sent a message to the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons requesting the deployment of a technical mission to Khan Shaykhun and Al-Shayrat airbase to determine what had occurred, in a comprehensive and transparent manner. We extended a similar invitation to the Chair of the JIM. In those two messages, we stated that we were willing to secure the mission's arrival at Al-Shayrat air base to determine whether or not it was used in the alleged attack on Khan Shaykhun.

Access to Khan Shaykhun should be guaranteed by the countries sponsoring terrorist groups operating in the area and providing toxic chemicals to those groups through neighbouring countries, including Turkey.

The Syrian Arab Republic unequivocally rejects the JIM's conclusions, released on 26 October. Since the Mechanism was established, Syria has repeatedly stated that its work should be conducted fairly. We have informed the Mechanism that if it cooperates with Western intelligence in preparing its reports, the outcome of its work will be useless. The JIM's visit to the Al-Shayrat airbase and its insistence on not collecting samples from it prove that its work was not conducted seriously and that it does not genuinely want to determine the truth.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns the direct and indirect accusations levelled against Syria in the reports of the Mechanism because they are contradict the facts about what took place in Khan Shaykhun. We also condemn the fact that the JIM relied on the accounts of the terrorists who committed the immoral attack in Khan Shaykhun and of other suspicious witnesses proffered by terrorists to the OPCW and the JIM, not to mention what was said by other sources. The investigation is therefore farcical and demonstrates a lack of transparency and professionalism.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran has been the primary victim of the biggest, most systematic and frequent use of chemical weapons in recent history. Even 30 years after the use of chemical weapons by Saddam Hussein against Iran,

many of those who endured it continue to suffer from the long-term complications of the use of such inhuman weapons. Despite that painful experience, Iran did not retaliate. Instead, it strongly supported the negotiation and conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and was one of the first countries to sign and ratify it. Iran continues to attach paramount importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits those weapons and provides for their total destruction, and strongly supports its full, effective, balanced and non-discriminatory implementation.

Recalling that the total destruction of all chemical weapons stockpiles remains the CWC's key objective, Iran welcomes the completion of the full destruction of the Russian Federation's chemical weapons, as confirmed by the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Other major parties that possess chemical weapons will also be embarking on sustained and accelerated efforts for full compliance with its obligations as soon as possible. The possibility of chemical weapons being used must be completely eliminated, but that cannot be fully realized so long as there remains even a single non-party to the Convention. We therefore urge all non-parties, particularly the Israeli regime, to join the Convention without further delay, based on its principled positions.

Iran attaches great importance to the annual General Assembly resolution on the Chemical Weapons Convention. Its original goal was to promote the full implementation and universalization of the Convention, which was why it was able to be adopted without a vote for two decades. However, in recent years, the politicization of the technical issues related to the implementation of the Convention has regrettably made its consensus-based adoption impossible. As we strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, we hope that the politicization of the draft resolution will end, thereby enabling the Committee to continue to adopt consensus-based resolutions aimed at supporting the full implementation of the Convention and its universalization.

Mr. Kim In Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is taking the floor to explain its position on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on

Their Destruction", on which the Committee will take action today.

I would like to clearly state our Government's position on paragraph 3, which references events that occurred in Malaysia. That reference to a case that led to the death of a citizen of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is merely part of a plot against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, used for impudent political purposes. It misleads public opinion and fabricates an international issue. It puts political pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to denounce deaths of its citizens through the use of the chemical weapon VX. It goes without saying that the allegations of our use of VX are absurd and currently being disproved in a trial in Malaysia. The inclusion of references to events in Malaysia goes against the Charter of the United Nations because it has no connection to the resolution.

It is crystal clear that the international community and the United Nations are being dominated by the United States. My delegation therefore strongly requests, indeed insists, that paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, relating to events that occurred in Malaysia, be deleted.

The Chair: The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has just proposed an oral amendment to draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1. I would like to remind delegations of rule 120 of the General Assembly's rules of procedure, which states that

"Proposals and amendments shall normally be submitted in writing to the Secretary-General, who shall circulate copies to the delegations. As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the committee unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting. The Chairman may, however, permit the discussion and consideration of amendments, or of motions as to procedure, even though such amendments and motions have not been circulated or have only been circulated the same day".

Given that today is the Committee's last day of work and it is my understanding that the main sponsor of the draft resolution would like to take action on it today, the Committee will consider the amendment at the time of action on the draft resolution itself.

The Committee will now hear delegations wishing to explain their position before we take action on the draft resolution under cluster 2, “Other weapons of mass destruction”. Delegations are reminded that statements are limited to 10 minutes.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): With regard to the upcoming vote on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, we believe that even compared to last year, the Polish-sponsored draft resolution has undergone significant changes for the worse. The text has gone from supporting the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to undermining it and fomenting unnecessary confrontation. Changes in the order of the draft resolution’s operative paragraphs have created a distorted picture, as if only issues related to chemical weapons in Syria have high priority. The result is that our Polish colleagues are trying to send a false and very dangerous message to the world that suggests that important objectives, such as the universalization of the Convention and the total elimination of the world’s chemical weapons, including the enormous stockpile that remains in the United States, have been put on the back burner. But that is certainly not the case.

One of the most significant events of the year has been our largest-scale common achievement in the entire history of the Convention — the Russian Federation’s completion of its destruction of its huge chemical-weapon arsenal. It is a vivid example of the Convention’s effectiveness, and particularly significant during this, the twentieth anniversary of the Convention. It was also very significant that dozens of countries took part in Russia’s effort to eliminate its chemical weapons, an achievement unprecedented in its scale and effectiveness. We are grateful all our partners for their assistance.

It is a great pity that the authors of the draft resolution could not find any kind words either for Russia, which completed the destruction of its chemical weapons ahead of schedule, or for the partners who assisted with it. Our Polish colleagues drafted paragraph 10 in a way that suggests that the main achievement is merely the confirmation by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) of that destruction, while everything else, including the billions of dollars and 20 years of titanic effort expended by Russia and dozens of other States, is not that important, either to posterity or the international community. What we are witnessing here is a gross distortion of reality. We would particularly like to draw the attention of the United Nations Office

for Disarmament Affairs and the Secretariat in general to the fact that an attempt is going on before their very eyes to establish a deliberately false interpretation of events in a United Nations document. We will not point fingers as to whom this suits. I think that that is very clear and nothing more needs to be said.

That is the kind of sham that our Polish colleagues have brought to be put to a vote. But that is not all. This already ugly picture is further exacerbated by paragraph 11, which welcomes the progress related to the destruction of category 2 chemical weapons in Libya — in other words, not military chemical weapons but their possible components. Does anyone see the difference? Through it, our Polish colleagues are equating two unequal events. Russia has destroyed more than 40,000 tons of military chemical stockpiles, while Libya has allegedly got rid of 1,000 tons of components. We all know, however, that 200 tons of those components, unmonitored, have disappeared without a trace, and yet there is no mention whatever of that in the draft resolution.

Against that backdrop, the attempts to discredit the genuinely positive results of Syria’s chemical demilitarization already confirmed by the OPCW are even more puzzling. Why equivocate? The Government of Syria, unselfishly and under strict international monitoring, eliminated its entire military chemical capacity in exceedingly difficult circumstances, fighting terrorism on its own territory. No other State has ever achieved as much in such difficult conditions and such a short time, and any insinuations to the contrary are therefore simply beyond the bounds of decency. All outstanding issues pertaining to the initial declaration can and should be resolved by the OPCW, in accordance with its usual practices. Nor should we forget that the Syrian authorities also agreed to take additional voluntary and unprecedented transparency measures with regard to its previous chemical programmes, above and beyond what was demanded of them under their Convention obligations.

Russia has always supported investigating every case of the use of chemical weapons, including on Syrian territory, fully and objectively. In order to establish the truth, the two existing mechanisms should be used in full. They have all the necessary means, and it is crucial that they visit the site of the incidents in order to collect samples, interview genuine witnesses and take other measures, in accordance with all the necessary procedures. But none of that is being

done. The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has done absolutely nothing to elucidate the truth of the situation. It came to its conclusions from its offices in New York and The Hague, for some reason, without even attempting to visit the site of the incidents. As a result, obvious facts were ignored, such as that the explosion in Khan Shaykhun was not from a chemical weapon but a rectangular conventional one. And then the site of the attack was unprofessionally filmed by White Helmets. None of that has been mentioned. It is obvious that a little sarin was introduced to the site only after the filming was done. Otherwise all the people who were positioned for the shoot would have already been dead. That is clear to any expert who understands anything about chemical weapons.

All of these facts, which have been reliably documented, were presented at a briefing in Moscow today. The briefing is available on the websites of the Russian Federation's Ministries for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Industry. We will shut down any attempt to mislead the international community using remote investigation, manipulating the facts or distorting events, let alone by through arguments based on unsubstantiated evidence from terrorist groups. Anyone voting for this sham of a draft resolution will in essence be an involuntary accomplice in an attempt to establish this flawed practice in international action.

Russia has done everything possible to restore the consensus-based character of the draft resolution. We have offered its authors frequent constructive suggestions on the text with the aim of striking at least a minimal balance.

At this point, Mr. Chair, I would like to ask you for just two more minutes, as this is a very important issue.

However, the authors preferred to take a different route. While paying lip service to their commitment to consensus, they stopped work on the draft two weeks before the voting. They also refused to conduct additional informal consultations aimed at reaching a compromise. That is not how civilized partners behave in today's world.

To sum up, our Polish colleagues' efforts to transform a consensus-based draft resolution on the CWC into a document that undermines the text of the Convention, distorts the facts, is replete with other unacceptable passages and even seeks to put additional pressure on Syria deserve the strongest condemnation. It is inadmissible to use consensus-based documents to

pursue short-term, highly politicized aims, particularly when they are directed at individual States Members of the United Nations. That is antithetical to our shared aims in achieving arms control and maintaining international security.

In conclusion, Russia will vote against draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, which undermines not only the CWC but the very foundations of intergovernmental cooperation on arms control and international security — in other words, all the reasons that have brought us here. Unlike our American colleagues, we will not call on all delegations to vote against the draft resolution. All those here should decide for themselves how to vote. But those who are genuinely interested in productive cooperation among States and care about the fate of the Convention should, at the very least, abstain in the voting.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Let me start by stating that I am simply amazed at the lengths to which Russia will go to defend the regime in Damascus. It is simply astonishing — and I am not easily astonished.

I have asked for the floor to speak on behalf of Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and my own country, the United States of America, to explain our vote on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction", sponsored by Poland.

Our respective countries intend to vote in favour of the draft resolution, as we believe it accurately reflects the objectives and goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention and supports the extraordinary work being done by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) team to attribute responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Equally important, the draft resolution highlights the

grave reality of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and underscores the need to hold those responsible to account. We express our deepest appreciation to the brave women and men of the JIM, the OPCW Fact-finding Mission and the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team for their dedication and professionalism in investigating chemical-weapon attacks in Syria and seeking to resolve the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in Syria's declaration.

We believe that there is no greater challenge to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) than a State party to it using chemical weapons in flagrant violation of its legal commitments. The international community must condemn such use and hold those who use chemical weapons accountable. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere is a threat to all of us, everywhere.

On 26 October, the JIM released its seventh report (S/2017/904, annex), which determined that the Syrian Arab Republic used a chemical weapon — sarin — on 4 April in Khan Shaykhun. Such use of a chemical weapon by the Syrian regime is reprehensible and violates Syria's obligations under the CWC and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Those findings made it clear that Syria has not renounced chemical warfare and further underscore the risks posed by its serious failure to declare the true magnitude and scope of its chemical-weapons programme and arsenals. The international community must squarely confront that reality and hold Syria accountable for its continued use of chemical weapons.

We also condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of a chemical weapon, sulphur mustard, by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) on 15 and 16 September 2016 in Umm Hawsh, in flagrant disregard of well-established international standards and norms. The use of chemical weapons by any State or non-State actor is inexcusable and we demand that the Syrian Government and ISIL immediately desist from any further use of chemical weapons. We fully support the extension of the JIM to continue its investigation into additional cases of confirmed or likely use determined by the OPCW Fact-finding Mission, and further support efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team to address the gaps and discrepancies in Syria's CWC declaration.

The events of the past year, including the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria and the use of the nerve agent VX in a fatal incident at the Kuala Lumpur

international airport, make it clear that the international community must do more to preserve the integrity and viability of the CWC and international laws, norms and standards against the use of chemical weapons. Any effort to ignore these serious issues undermines the work of the international community to date, detracts from the extraordinary efforts of the OPCW and the United Nations and constitutes a grave challenge to the CWC and the entire international legal framework. We must continue to collectively condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by any State or non-State actor and to hold all those who use such weapons accountable. Anything less would be utterly irresponsible.

Mrs. Sánchez Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Cuban delegation would like to explain its vote on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

Cuba reiterates its full support of and commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Our country adheres to all of the Convention's provisions and takes an active and constructive part in the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Cuba categorically rejects the use of chemical weapons and advocates the complete, irreversible and verifiable destruction of all categories of declared remaining chemical weapons as soon as possible.

Regrettably, while we agree with the general objective of the draft resolution, we will be unable to support it this year. In the light of the twentieth anniversary of the Convention, our country has made a special appeal to the authors of the text to revisit the previous practice of adopting the text by consensus so as to convey a message of unity to the international community in support of the existing international standards against chemical weapons. During consultations, we proposed restoring the traditional balance of the draft resolution. However, our concerns about the text were not taken into consideration. We are about to take action on a draft resolution that is patently unbalanced and politicized and does not adequately reflect the work done in the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention over the past year.

It is for those reasons that Cuba will vote against operative paragraph 2 and abstain in the voting on

the draft resolution's fourth preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 15, as well as on the text as a whole. We are unable to support its erroneous and dangerous approach. With regard to the paragraphs mentioned, we believe that the OPCW is the forum for discussions on this issue. It is not the role of the General Assembly to promote the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism. Several delegations have already voiced their legitimate concerns, which should be duly taken into account. The First Committee is not mandated to support or take action on the findings of a report submitted to the Security Council that is not based on an exhaustive on-site investigation. The outstanding technical issues related to the situation in Syria should be resolved within the framework of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, without distorted or politicized approaches, in line with its established principles.

Draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1 disregards the ongoing cooperation of the Syrian Government, despite the complexity of the security situation. That cooperation has enabled the prompt destruction of Syria's chemical weapons and its accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention as a State party. The text also ignores the cooperation of the Syrian authorities in the declaration process of the Syrian national committee in its attempt to determine the facts, and with the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism. We reiterate our call to the sponsors of the draft resolution to consider the action taken in the past four years that has diminished the consensus on the text over time. Confrontation and politicization should not continue to trump the spirit of cooperation and unanimous support for the Chemical Weapons Convention. The international community's support for the Convention and its universalization should be strengthened in the forum of the First Committee.

Mr. Almutairi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to explain my delegation's vote on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction". The draft resolution outlines the exceptional work done by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism, and reaffirms the importance of holding to account those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

My delegation is concerned about the report on the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, which violates international law and all moral and human principles. My delegation reaffirms the importance of taking a strict position against those responsible.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation and those of other brother countries have worked to craft a balanced, consensus-based draft resolution that reflects the positive steps taken towards the total elimination of chemical weapons in Syria. Nonetheless, some delegations, in particular that of the United States, continue to disregard all that we have accomplished so far and resort to duplicity, highlighting matters that bear no relation to draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1.

The United States delegation and others claim that they would like to see a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. However, all reports, studies and research indicate that Israel is the only country possessing a nuclear arsenal, as well as the largest stockpile of chemical and biological weapons in the Middle East. That does not seem to be enough to inspire the United States and other countries to compel Israel to accede to international conventions and treaties related to weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, international reports show irrefutably that between 1948 and today, Israel has used biological and chemical weapons more than once against the peoples of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. The 2009 Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48) confirmed Israel's use of enriched uranium and white phosphorus against civilians in Gaza. Those reports have not led the United States and other hypocritical States that retain their programmes of weapons of mass destruction to investigate the Israeli violations that pose a threat to regional and international peace and security.

Given the belief of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic that the use of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, is unacceptable, immoral and reprehensible, and given our view that we must establish a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and prove to the world our commitment to opposing the use of chemical weapons, we signed the Chemical Weapons Convention. In 2003, as members of the Security Council, we proposed a draft resolution to establish a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

However, our efforts at the time were thwarted by a threat by the United States to veto the draft resolution.

As a member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Syrian Arab Republic participates in its meetings and debates on various issues like any other State Member of the United Nations. Ever since my country acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention, it has always worked to meet its accession criteria, respect the decisions of the Executive Council and honour its commitments in a timely manner. It has always provided the necessary support to the staff of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations, support that has been lauded by the organizations and international public opinion.

The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that it rejects the most recent report of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (S/2017/904, annex) because it has always cooperated sincerely with the Mechanism. It has never wavered in its support for establishing all kinds of information, including information necessary for proving that terrorists used chemical weapons, with the direct or indirect support of States of the region or beyond, in particular the United States, France and the United Kingdom and their instruments in the region — Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and others. This demonstrates the pressure that such States exert on the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact-finding Mission and the Joint Investigative Mechanism. It also underscores the rejection by the OPCW Executive Council, led by Western States, of the draft resolution proposed by Russia and Iran with the aim of sending the Fact-finding Mission to Khan Shaykhun and the Al-Shayrat airbase. The Executive Council voted against the draft resolution. When the Joint Investigative Mechanism finally decided to heed the calls of the Syrian Arab Republic and other States for the truth about the incident in Khan Shaykhun to be determined, it was too late. The Mechanism was dispatched to the airbase.

The manner in which the investigation was conducted demonstrates a lack of professionalism. The Mechanism focused on formalities and on positing illogical elements that were not based on scientific proof. It refused to collect samples in order to conceal the fact that the United States had conducted an air strike on the airbase, which is an important location for the Syrian army in its attempts to combat Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front, two groups that the Security Council

lists as terrorist organizations. In response to pressure from the West, the Mechanism and the Fact-finding Mission refused to visit Khan Shaykhun to determine the facts, for reasons that were clearly outlined in the Mechanism's report and that are unacceptable.

Despite the fact that the Fact-finding Mission had the approval of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security to visit Khan Shaykhun, and that during consultations in the Security Council, the Secretary-General confirmed that the United States and the West were eager to extend the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, the reports revealed the real intentions of those States and the fallacious work conducted to cover up terrorism and various crimes, in particular the use of banned chemical weapons. Syria will continue to work to achieve consensus on all these issues, including the draft resolution. However, we note that there have been attempts in the past to politicize the draft resolution and direct it at a particular State, in this case, Syria. Such deliberate selectivity is misplaced, since Syria is a State party to the Convention and a full-fledged member of the OPCW.

A technical approach should have been taken to address the situation in Syria. Given the politicization, partiality and erroneous accounts of the real situation on the ground, my delegation will vote against the fourth preambular paragraph and operative paragraphs 2 and 15, as well as against the draft resolution as a whole. We call on other States to do the same.

Ms. Dris (Malaysia): For the benefit of our colleagues who did not have the opportunity to attend the extensive informal consultations on the text, with regard to paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, the main sponsor provided numerous opportunities to engage on the text, including in order to find a formulation that would be acceptable to the First Committee. In the light of the concerns raised by colleagues who have spoken before us, the current formulation of paragraph 3, which was initially proposed by the main sponsor and subsequently amended with our input, was designed to align the language more factually with the executive decision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the use of the nerve agent VX. We have engaged very closely with the main sponsor of the text at earlier stages of the consultations, with the support of the States Members of the United Nations that attended the consultations. We now believe that there was strong

consensus on the formulation that was arrived at by the main sponsor of the text.

I would like to reiterate that the current text is a factual reflection of the statement of the Government of Malaysia on the use of the nerve agent VX. As such, we wish to put it on record that we endorse the current formulation of paragraph 3 and seek its retention in the draft resolution. We urge other Member States to support it, given the factual reference to the incidence of the use of VX on our territory.

Mr. Azadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have taken the floor to explain my delegation's vote on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

My delegation will vote against the draft resolution because, regrettably, it has been highly politicized. In its current form, instead of serving the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the draft resolution serves only the short-sighted political interests of certain countries. By making reference to a contentious and highly politicized issue, it distracts attention from the promotion of the Convention's objectives by establishing a world free of chemical weapons. With regard to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, the draft resolution deliberately ignores the accession of the Syrian Arab Republic to the CWC, as well as its unprecedented cooperation with the Convention's terms, including those requiring the destruction of its chemical weapons in the shortest possible time.

It also misleads the international community by providing inaccurate and biased information about the use of chemical weapons in Syria. For instance, the inspectors have not conducted on-site inspections to take samples and collect physical evidence. Instead of relying on scientific information as it claims, it is clear that the findings of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) are based on speculation, assumptions and remote assessment. The report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (S/2017/904, annex) is the result of interviews and information received from open sources and terrorist groups. The accounts are unsubstantiated and unreliable. The conclusions of the report are therefore not credible. Moreover, the strict observance of the principles of impartiality and independence, as well as the preservation of the chain of custody, are of

utmost importance in conducting investigations into the alleged use of chemical weapons and drawing reliable scientific conclusions.

Regrettably, some key elements of those principles were not observed by the JIM, seriously undermining the reliability and credibility of its report and conclusions. Making reference to such a distorted report also has an impact on the draft resolution. The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, in any circumstances. The condemnation of a State party to the Convention based on unproven assumptions and unsubstantiated claims is unacceptable. My delegation hopes that the politicization of the draft resolution will end, thereby enabling the Committee to continue adopting consensus resolutions in support of the full implementation of the CWC and its universalization.

Ms. Pajevic (Montenegro): Montenegro aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the United States.

The Chair: The Committee will now take action on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1 was submitted by the representative of Poland on 12 October. The sponsor of the draft resolution is listed in document A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1.

The Chair: An amendment has been introduced to delete operative paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1.

I shall first put the amendment to the vote.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour

Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Syrian Arab Republic, Vanuatu

Against

Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde,

Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Yemen

Abstaining

Algeria, Angola, Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Djibouti, Fiji, Gambia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zambia

Operative paragraph 3 was retained by 116 votes to 5, with 23 abstentions.

The Chair: Separate, recorded votes have been requested on the fourth preambular paragraph and operative paragraphs 2 and 15 of draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1.

I shall now put to the vote the fourth preambular paragraph.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada,

Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against

Belarus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Zimbabwe

Abstaining

Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cuba, Ecuador, Fiji, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mali, Mauritius, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The fourth preambular paragraph was retained by 134 votes to 7, with 19 abstentions.

The Chair: I shall now put to the vote operative paragraph 2.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize,

Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Benin, Cambodia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, India, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania

Operative paragraph 2 was retained by 122 votes to 11, with 24 abstentions.

The Chair: I shall now put to the vote operative paragraph 15.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

Belarus, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cambodia, Cuba, Ecuador, Fiji, Ghana, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam

Operative paragraph 15 was retained by 123 votes to 9, with 27 abstentions.

The Chair: The Committee will now take action on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, as a whole.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Angola, Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cuba, Kenya, Lebanon, Mali, Nicaragua, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1 was adopted by 150 votes to 6, with 12 abstentions.

The Chair: I now call on delegations wishing to make statements in explanation of vote on the draft resolution just adopted.

Mr. Hassan (Egypt): I am taking the floor to explain Egypt's position with regard to draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

Egypt has actively participated in the negotiations leading to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and has always strongly supported its objectives. In spite of the draft resolution's shortcomings, my delegation voted in favour of it again this year, in order to reiterate that Egypt continues to support the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, and maintains its firm position against the use of chemical weapons. We again stress that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is a precondition for Egypt to review its position on conventions on other weapons of mass destruction, particularly since there remains only one State in the region that has not yet acceded to any of the three treaties on weapons of mass destruction.

Lastly, my delegation would like to recall that in September 2013, Egypt invited States of the region that had not signed or ratified any other multilateral instrument on weapons of mass destruction to commit to doing so, and to deposit letters to that effect with the Security Council with a view to arranging a process of simultaneous accession. All the States of the region except one answered that call positively, as was reflected in the relevant note circulated by the Secretary-General in that regard.

Mr. Riquet (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to explain France's position on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

France fully aligns itself with the explanation of vote made by the representative of the United States earlier today. My delegation would like to add a few remarks.

At the outset, France thanks the delegation of Poland for its efforts in the increasingly challenging

negotiations for preparing the draft resolution. We particularly welcomed the efforts made to forge international consensus on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which forces us to acknowledge the criminal use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria has not stopped. Last year the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) concluded that Syrian armed and security forces had carried out three chlorine attacks, and that Da'esh was responsible for a mustard gas attack. Since then, another attack, on 4 April, has killed 83 people in the town of Khan Shaykhun, in which the organic phosphorus neurotoxin sarin was used. France declassified national information in April and confirmed that the Syrian regime had been responsible for the most recent attack.

The report of the Fact-finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) also confirmed France's analysis. The report of the JIM (S/2017/904, annex), published on 26 October, clearly states that the Syrian regime carried out the sarin attack that occurred on 4 April and that Da'esh was responsible for the mustard gas attack. The involvement of Syrian armed forces in the first attack highlights the inconsistencies in Syria's declaration of its chemical stockpiles. Major uncertainties also remain surrounding the ongoing Syrian chemical-weapon programme. Such weapons cannot continue to be used unless the country is maintaining substantial capabilities. Successive OPCW reports this year have underscored that the technical secretariat is still unable to confirm that the Syrian declaration is complete and in compliance with the CWC requirements. In addition, the potential existence of residual capabilities on the Syrian territory only increases the risk that such prohibited weapons will fall into the hands of terrorists.

Given those challenges, France would like to underscore the commitment and professionalism of the members of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in determining those responsible for the attacks. The Mechanism has proved its worth.

In conclusion, France will not give up. My country will not allow the non-proliferation regime to be undermined. To date, it is one of the pillars of the international peace and security architecture

built by the international community after 1945. Our priority must remain focused on dismantling the Syrian chemical-weapon programme and combating impunity. France fully supports and trusts the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. In that regard, France solemnly calls on all States Members of the United Nations to work together to face the important challenges and build the consensus necessary before the JIM's mandate expires. That is our duty and responsibility.

Mr. Luque Márquez (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador is a firm proponent of the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and is fully compliant with its provisions. I would like to point out that my country signed the Convention on 14 January 1993, the day after it opened for signature. My country does not possess and never has possessed chemical weapons. We continue to denounce their use by anyone, anywhere, as clearly stipulated in paragraph 1 of the draft resolution just adopted.

We therefore voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev. 1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction", as a whole, as a sign of our ongoing support for the Convention. However, my delegation abstained in the voting on the fourth preambular paragraph and on operative paragraphs 2 and 15 of the draft resolution because those paragraphs have politicized the draft resolution and prevented its adoption by consensus.

Ecuador would like to express its respect for the experts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact-finding Mission and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. The assessment of the work of those mechanisms and the content of their reports is determined by those that established their mandates, in particular the technical secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The First Committee does not have that mandate. The submission of a draft resolution that addresses the Chemical Weapons Convention — a universal instrument — and that includes controversial paragraphs that are not accepted by all States can only undermine the Convention. We therefore reiterate our call to the draft resolution's sponsor to reconsider, for the good of the Convention, the approach used to draft it so as to be able to return to a consensus-based text.

Mr. Kazi (Bangladesh): Bangladesh would like to explain its vote on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1.

As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Bangladesh is gravely concerned about the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and Malaysia this year. Bangladesh has taken note of the most recent report (S/2017/904, annex) of the United Nations-Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and remains mindful of the various constraints within which the JIM had to operate. It would have been ideal if the JIM could discharge its functions at the highest professional level, but the prevailing circumstances on the ground were clearly not conducive to that. Bangladesh believes that the fourth preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 2 are factual, based on the report of the JIM, and therefore voted in favour of those paragraphs, as well as the draft resolution as a whole.

Bangladesh did, however, abstain in the voting on operative paragraph 15, since we have noted the progress that has been made in disposing of the declared chemical weapons stockpiles in the Syrian Arab Republic, and we strongly encourage further consultations between the technical secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Syrian Arab Republic, in order to resolve all outstanding issues in a spirit of confidence and cooperation.

Ms. Dagher (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to explain its vote on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”.

At the outset, Lebanon reaffirms its full commitment to the principles and objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which it is a State party. On more than one occasion, Lebanon has affirmed the fact that it considers the use of such weapons to be a blatant violation of international law. However, in view of the context of draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, in particular its paragraph 2, and given the the Lebanese Government’s policy of maintaining distance with regard to the situation in Syria, Lebanon abstained in the voting on the draft resolution in spite of its full support of its basic objective, its appreciation of the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical

Weapons and its firm belief in the importance of full international cooperation for a world free of chemical weapons and the risk of their use.

Mr. Sun Lei (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to explain my delegation’s vote on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”.

China has maintained a clear and consistent position on chemical weapons. China values the important role of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in the prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons over time and maintains that the international community should strictly comply with all treaty obligations, in a comprehensive manner. We strongly oppose the use of chemical weapons by any country, organization or individual in any circumstances and for any purpose.

With regard to the issue of chemical weapons in Syria, China supports the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and other relevant United Nations bodies in their efforts to conduct comprehensive, objective and impartial investigations. Their conclusions should be based on substantial evidence and facts that can stand the test of time. At present, differences remain surrounding the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Paragraphs 2 and 15 of the draft resolution, sponsored by Poland, do not take into consideration the legitimate proposals made by China and other countries. Those paragraphs do not reflect the positions held by all parties and demonstrate a lack of objectivity and impartiality. They are therefore not conducive to finding suitable solutions to chemical weapons issues in Syria or other regional hotbed issues. The draft resolution is also incompatible with positive international efforts to find a political solution to the situation in Syria. In addition, the speedy destruction of abandoned chemical weapons is also an important part of compliance with the CWC. Large quantities of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan in China remain a grave threat to the safety of the life, property and environment of the Chinese people. The international community should pay more attention to that issue.

During consultations, China made proposals on the text of the draft resolution, but they were not adopted. Based on the aforementioned reasons, the Chinese delegation found it difficult to accept the text and

therefore voted against the draft resolution. We must point out that, owing to problems with certain items, various parties requested that the draft resolution on chemical weapons be adopted by a vote in the First Committee, breaking the practice of consensus. That is regrettable. China would like to see sponsors of draft resolutions pay more attention to the legitimate concerns of China and other parties, in the interests of maintaining the unity of the States parties to the Convention and promoting the joint efforts of the international community to achieve the purposes and goals of the Convention.

Ms. Bhandari (India): India voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, given the importance we attach to the Chemical Weapons Convention as a non-discriminatory treaty for the total elimination of a specific type of weapon of mass destruction. We regret that consensus on the draft resolution was once again not possible this year as well. It has been our consistent position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at anytime, by anybody and under any circumstances cannot be justified, and that the perpetrators of such abhorrent acts must be held accountable. My delegation is deeply concerned about reports of the use of chemical weapons by terrorist groups. We believe that the international community must take urgent measures and decisive action to prevent the possibility of any future use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Méndez Graterol (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela once again condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anybody and under any circumstances. That is why we are firmly committed to the total elimination of this category of weapons of mass destruction. In that context, we condemn the chemical-weapon attacks carried out by Da'esh in Iraq and Syria. We emphasize the need for all States to adhere to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The full implementation of the provisions of the Convention requires joint work by all States parties.

Despite that shared goal, we look on with concern as this year we are presented yet again with a text that includes controversial elements that politicize its nature and scope, since it attempt to reach conclusions regarding an ongoing investigation that is being carried out by another body that has not yet produced definitive results. Those divisive factors also have nothing to do with the central goal of the draft resolution, which is the promotion and consolidation of efforts to ensure the

universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention and full compliance with it. Those divisive factors have made it impossible to reach a consensus on the draft resolution.

Our delegation believes that the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic must be investigated impartially, transparently and objectively by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague and by the relevant United Nations mechanisms, as appropriate. Similarly, the legitimate concerns of some States about the reports of the Joint Investigative Mechanism must be taken into account.

Accordingly, our delegation abstained in the voting on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1., just adopted.

Mr. Kim In Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is taking the floor to explain the position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, which we voted against.

We want to clarify once again that claims that we are responsible for the deaths of our citizens from the use of chemical weapons are in fact acts of political terror saying that black is white. We have clearly expressed our position many times that it is the consistent policy of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea not to produce, manufacture, stockpile or use any chemical weapons. When the United States and its followers show their true nature by deviously inserting elements about to my country into a draft resolution, that represents an intentional political plot to use any means possible to label my country as a terror-sponsoring State. The United States has gradually become increasingly open, oppressive and strategic in its hostile policies towards my country. It is the just right of a sovereign State and its legitimate right to self-defence that no one can deny us the right to respond strongly to such hostile acts. We totally reject and strongly oppose the draft resolution, particularly paragraph 3, which was manipulated by the United States and its followers.

Mr. Takamizawa (Japan): I would like to explain Japan's vote on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1.

Japan voted in favour of the draft resolution, as it aims to promote the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which Japan attaches the greatest importance. Japan has been supporting the

extraordinary work of the Fact-finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as well as the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), in order to determine responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Japan is of the view that the activities of both organizations are fair, impartial and adequate, and include vital expertise. They have already made concrete achievements. The 26 October JIM report (S/2017/904, annex) concluded that the Syrian Government is responsible for the use of chemical weapons. The use of chemical weapons is impermissible under any circumstances, and Japan condemns it in the strongest possible terms. Pursuing accountability for the use of chemical weapons is an issue not just for the international community but for all human beings.

Ms. Sehayek-Soroka (Israel): Israel's delegation would like to explain its vote after the voting on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1.

We fully align ourselves with the statement made earlier by the representative of the United States of America on behalf of 42 States, including Israel, and would like to make a few comments in our national capacity.

A few days ago, the latest report by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) (S/2017/904, annex) was submitted to the Security Council. This year's findings show once again that the use of chemical weapons is widespread in Syria. The JIM found that the Syrian regime was responsible for the release of sarin in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April — an attack that killed dozens of people, including many children. This year's report also found the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) responsible for the use of sulphur mustard in Umm Hawsh on 16 September 2016. This report adds to the 2016 report (see S/2016/888), which also found the Syrian regime to be responsible for three additional cases of the use of chemical weapons, along with one incident attributed to ISIS.

What we are witnessing in Syria is a consistent and unacceptable pattern of use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. These are not isolated, unauthorized incidents, but a premeditated *modus operandi* on the part of the regime against its own population that represents an ongoing disregard for all international norms. The Syrian regime must be held accountable for the use of such weapons and for increasing the threat

of the proliferation of such despicable capabilities throughout the region.

More than four years have passed since the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2118 (2013). The resolution called on Syria to fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to declare and destroy its chemical weapons capabilities. However, four years have passed and we continue to see the Syrian regime repeatedly using its capabilities against its own people. Four years have passed and the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified by the technical secretariat of the OPCW have yet to be fully addressed. At this point, it is evident that the residual chemical capabilities of Syria, including research and development, must be fully dismantled. Any other course of action will allow the Syrian regime to continue its shameful pattern and to eventually rehabilitate its chemical-weapons programme.

Finally, Israel voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1 because of our long-standing support for the annual resolution and the goals and the purposes of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which we signed in 1993. Israel maintains a close dialogue with the OPCW and is party to the 1925 Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare.

Mr. Weinoh (Nigeria): My delegation would like to explain its action on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

It is important to mention that the entirety of this annual draft resolution has enjoyed the support of my delegation because of our firm belief in its ability to advance the goal of international peace and security and thereby enhance the chemical non-proliferation regime. Unfortunately, our position changed during last year's session of the First Committee, obliging us to abstain in the voting on paragraph 2 of the draft resolution. In explaining our action last year, my delegation, despite condemning the stockpiling and use of chemical weapons under any guise and voicing its commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention, stated that the draft resolution did not specify what substance the Syrian armed forces allegedly used. My delegation was particularly wary of accusations that had not been fully

substantiated against the armed forces of any sovereign nation. My delegation believed that the initiators of the draft resolution would take our concerns on board in this year's text, but unfortunately that was not the case.

In the light of those considerations, my delegation had no option but to abstain in the voting on operative paragraphs 2 and 15 of the draft resolution.

Mr. Nguyen (Viet Nam): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to explain our vote after the voting on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

Viet Nam strongly advocates comprehensive and complete disarmament and non-proliferation, particularly for weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), including chemical weapons. We condemn the use of chemical weapons and are opposed to all actions that harm innocent civilians. We believe that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances, is not only a clear violation of international law but also goes against all of humankind's moral and ethical principles. For years, therefore, through the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and other disarmament mechanisms and initiatives, we have been joining efforts aimed at the total elimination of chemical weapons and other WMDs. Based on that principled position, Viet Nam has always voted in favour of this draft resolution as a whole in the past, and did the same in the voting today.

However, that rationale is also why we had to abstain in the voting on operative paragraph 15 of the draft resolution. We are of the view that the draft resolution should recognize all efforts made towards the total elimination of chemical weapons, including those of the Syrian Government. We therefore acknowledge the Syrian Government's commitment and its efforts to completely destroy its chemical weapons and facilities under a very stringent verification process, in accordance with the CWC and the relevant decisions of its Executive Council. In that regard, we call for further international support and assistance for the continued cooperation between the Syrian Government and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Mr. Abbani (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to offer my sincerest condolences to the delegations of the United States, Argentina and Belgium for the terrorist attack that claimed the lives

of civilians this past Tuesday in lower Manhattan. We stand in solidarity with the families of the victims and wish the injured a speedy recovery.

My delegation would like to explain its vote on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

Algeria is fully committed to all the principles of the Chemical Weapons Convention as a party to that global Convention. We have fully and effectively implemented all of its provisions. Since the Convention's entry into force, we have also participated in activities that promote international and regional cooperation in furthering its objectives. We reiterate that the Convention's scope of implementation is not limited to the prohibition of a whole category of weapons of mass destruction and to destroying the stockpiles of such weapons in order to maintain international peace and security. Rather, it transcends that goal in seeking the peaceful use of chemical materials and technologies that are essential to the development of all State economies, without exception, as well as their transfer, especially to developing countries. It also promotes the exchange of scientific information to that end.

On many occasions and within different multilateral frameworks, Algeria has expressed its categorical rejection of the use of chemical weapons by any party, under any circumstances and on any pretext. We consider the use of such weapons to be unacceptable regardless of the circumstances, because it is a blatant violation of international law, and we strongly condemn it. We hoped that the content of the draft resolution would be of a general nature, based on the Chemical Weapons Convention and the positive elements of its implementation at the international level, in the light of the objectives and commitments that we have undertaken at the Convention's review conferences, along with the important issues addressed within the framework of annual meetings of States parties.

With regard to Syrian chemical weapons, we regret the omission of the paragraphs included in the 2014, version of the resolution, which recognized the progress made regarding the destruction of the Syrian chemical-weapon stockpiles and the efforts made by the Syrian Arab Republic in cooperating with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), despite what was its recent accession to the

Convention and the difficult and complex security situation in the country resulting from the attacks on it by terrorist groups. Algeria believes that focusing on a specific case in the draft resolution leaves it unbalanced, especially since this matter is the subject of ongoing debate in the Security Council and the OPCW.

There are a number of observations that we could put forward regarding the paragraphs relating to Syria's chemical weapons, particularly with regard to the Khan Shaykhun incidents. First, we were not given access to the report referenced in paragraph 2 of the draft resolution (S/2017/904, annex). Instead, we have had only information unofficially supplied from here and there, showing that the report contains contradictory information. Secondly, the Fact-finding Mission has not visited the Khan Shaykhun site to see it first-hand. The same applies to the Al-Shayrat airbase, even after the approval of the United Nations Security and Safety Services Network was given, leading to a lack of accurate information in that regard. Thirdly, the JIM did not visit Khan Shaykhun, only the Al-Shayrat airbase, without taking any samples. Fourthly, the reliance on the accounts of injured witnesses is problematic because we cannot verify that they were at the site at the time in question.

Moreover, the Executive Council of the OPCW has no purview or remit to replace the Security Council. The Security Council mandated the investigation on the use of chemical weapons in Syria and continues to be the sole body entitled to consider the outcome of that investigation and take action, in accordance with the principle of parallelism of forms. However, the Security Council has not taken action with regard to the JIM's third and fourth reports (S/2016/738/Rev.1 and S/2016/888) and has yet to consider the most recent report referred to in paragraph 2 of the draft resolution. Additionally, as we said before in reference to issues that fall within the purview of other United Nations bodies, the use of double standards with regard to the implementation of the commitments under the Convention does not serve the draft resolution *per se* or its objectives. Nor does it serve any relevant party, including with regard to the dossier on Syrian chemical weapons.

Algeria therefore abstained in the voting on the relevant paragraphs because we cannot reach conclusions or make accurate decisions based on disputable and controversial information, and we cannot verify the authenticity of the information.

Mr. Yermakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia is a consistent and strong supporter of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We do not always talk about that; we are actually better at taking concrete action. That is why we have urged all of our partners not to confuse two very different and incompatible matters. On the one hand there is the Convention, which we all support; on the other hand is the blatant desire of the United States and its allies to remove the legitimate Government of Syria. That is a fact.

I would like to once again draw the Committee's attention to the fact that just a couple of hours ago, in Moscow, the Ministries for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation held a joint briefing that was also attended by the entire diplomatic corps and a broad range of Russian and foreign journalists. Incontrovertible evidence was provided for the fact that the information in the report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (S/2017/904, annex) is once again a distortion of the facts. The incident in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April was staged by anti-Government forces and has absolutely no connection to the action of Syria's armed forces.

All of that information will be officially presented in the Security Council, which is in fact responsible for examining such issues. Anyone who wants to understand what happened, rather than simply make statements, will be able to see the video of the briefing on the websites of the three ministries I just mentioned. The statements that we keep hearing from our Western partner, of course, not to be too blunt, are quite far from the truth. That goes without saying, because their aims are completely different.

Regardless of who used chemical weapons and where, our Western partners will continue to blame the Syrian Government for everything because they have a clear goal, which is to remove President Al-Assad by any means possible, even methods that are not particularly pleasant or honest. No one in the West has concealed that intention. By the way, our Western partners are sitting pretty, I would say. We all know that there are two groups in the Fact-finding Mission that is investigating the claims from the official Syrian authorities. One of them is focusing on the Government of Syria, while the second is investigating the incidents that could be attributed to terrorists. Both are headed by our partners from the United Kingdom. I think the Committee can agree that this notion of fair geographic

representation has taken a strange turn. I have the greatest respect for the great British empire, but it does not encompass the entire world.

Furthermore, owing to these curious circumstances, even the worst, most despicable, least well-founded claims by the opposition are examined with incredible speed. The result is always the same, always absolutely predictable and always follows the same trend, while the examination of well-founded data, full of serious content, provided by the Syrian authorities, is delayed as much as possible or essentially rejected, for invented reasons. We know that. A clear example of it is in the version of a story that says that the Government of Syria dropped a barrel containing chloride from a helicopter and the barrel fell into a ventilation shaft with the exact same diameter as the barrel's. They all claim very seriously that this is a verified fact, but it is completely absurd. Does everyone take us for idiots, or what?

On 7 April, the United States conducted a massive missile strike against the territory of a sovereign State — an attack on the Al-Shayrat airbase. The pretext was that the Government of Syria was involved in the incident in Khan Shaykhun. It is clear that they have to come up with every possible way now to prove that the Government of Syria was guilty. But the hard facts say something completely different. Let us take a look at recent history. We were all witnesses here when a well-respected Secretary of State of the United States waved a couple of test tubes in front of our eyes (see S/PV.4701). Remember what happened afterwards? A country was basically destroyed, resulting in 1 million deaths in Iraq. And what was the result? The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant emerged. Has history taught those here nothing?

By the way, returning to the topic of the Al-Shayrat airbase, the United States demanded inspections. It was obviously convinced that the Syrians would refuse, but strangely enough, the Government of Syria immediately agreed. The United States then immediately lost any interest in such an inspection. In the Joint Investigative Mechanism, people started saying that a visit to inspect the site was unnecessary. In other words, they had already decided everything, so why look at facts that would contradict the conclusions already reached?

The so-called Joint Investigative Mechanism, which has every opportunity to conduct a real, thorough investigation, is therefore doing nothing at all. By the way, we heard here again that Russia supports

the Al-Assad regime. That is a gross distortion of the facts. We understand that the United States has major military, political and economic interests in the Middle East, and we have great respect for the interests of any State. But we also know that Bashar Al-Assad was a partner of the United States, and yet as soon as he refused to take instructions from Washington, he was immediately transformed into a monster — even though there was nothing taking place in Syria to warrant that transformation. These are simply facts that we all know.

As for Russia, the strength of our position lies precisely in the fact that we do not support any regimes. Furthermore, we do not remove any regimes, unlike our American partners who do that — or try to — with alarming frequency. Once again, these are all facts, and one cannot argue with facts. Unfortunately, our Western partners continue to disregard those facts and prefer to base their positions on their political preferences and aims. It is very unfortunate, but that is the world in which we live.

The Chair: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting on the items under cluster 2.

The Committee has thus concluded action on all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under the agenda items allocated to it.

Programme of work

The Chair: Our last order of business is to adopt the draft provisional programme of work and timetable of the First Committee for 2018, as contained in document A/C.1/72/CRP.6, which was revised and has been distributed to all delegations.

The draft programme of work for 2018 is based on the practices of the Committee in previous years. I would like to draw the Committee's attention, however, to the fact that an additional meeting for the general debate has been identified, given the increasing number of speakers over the years. The programme of work comprises one organizational meeting — which will now take place on Thursday, 4 October 2018 — eight meetings for the general debate, 12 for the thematic discussion segment and six meetings for the action phase.

I would like to remind all delegations that the First Committee shares its conference facilities and other resources with the Fourth Committee. Consequently, the draft provisional programme of the First Committee

for 2018, which we are considering now, has been prepared in consultation with the secretariat of the Fourth Committee. The two Committees will continue to coordinate their work and maintain a sequential pattern of conducting their meetings, in order to maximize shared resources.

The provisional programme of work under consideration will be finalized and issued in its final form before the First Committee starts its substantive work at its next session.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the draft provisional programme of work and timetable of the First Committee for 2018, as contained in document A/C.1/72/CRP.6?

It was so decided.

Statement by the Chair

The Chair: The Committee has now concluded its consideration of the last item on the agenda for today. This year, the Committee finished its work in four weeks and four days. I regret to note, in that regard, that we have not managed to preserve one of the Committee's best practices — of not using the last meeting scheduled and to use it only as necessary.

During the session, 131 delegations made statements during the general debate segment, while an impressive 312 interventions were made during the thematic discussion segment. During the action phase, the Committee adopted 58 draft resolutions or decisions, 30 of which were adopted by recorded votes, with 27 separate votes requested. Twenty-eight draft proposals were adopted without a vote, accounting for approximately 48 per cent of all action taken, as compared to last year's figure of 50 per cent adopted without a vote.

The Committee introduced several measures at this session to facilitate our work. I am encouraged by the overwhelmingly positive feedback that the Bureau and I have received from delegations concerning the use of the new e-Delegate portal, which has replaced QuickFirst. I furthermore wish to acknowledge the efforts made by most delegations to deliver their statements, explanations of vote and rights of reply within the time limits set by the General Assembly, in accordance with its rules of procedure. We would not have been able to finish our work on time without their cooperation.

Before I adjourn the meeting and close the main part of the seventy-second session of the First Committee, I shall give the floor to delegations that wish to make closing remarks.

Mr. Weinoh (Nigeria): At the outset, I would like to express the deepest condolences of the Group of African States to the United States of America, Argentina and Belgium for the cowardly terrorist attacks that occurred in this city on Tuesday, 31 October.

The African Group would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, for your excellent service and the leadership of the First Committee during the course of its work at this session. Having worked assiduously to ensure a successful outcome, the Group has benefited immensely from your experience and the expertise, even as Member States debated, negotiated and voted on draft resolutions and decisions. The Group would also like to commend the members of the Bureau for their dedication and hard work in the past month.

As a Committee that is seized with the duty of addressing the challenges posed to international peace and security, the African Group underscores the value of that very important mandate and calls on Member States to remain focused and demonstrate their commitment to reaching the goals of a nuclear-weapon-free world and an end to the illicit trade in and illegal transfers of small arms and light weapons.

The Group wishes to express its appreciation to the Office for Disarmament Affairs and, most important, to the Secretary and the entire secretariat of the First Committee for providing delegations with the necessary support and assistance.

Finally, as we depart from this room, let us again be reminded that destiny has called us to work tirelessly and with great determination to bequeath a peaceful, just and equitable world to our children and those yet unborn.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, for your leadership of the First Committee during a historic year for us all as we welcome the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, conceived here in the Committee. Our work has also led to the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to civil society, which supports our work. Mexico is proud of those accomplishments.

Mexico applauds your leadership, but would also like to note an issue of concern. It is irregular

and in violation of General Assembly procedure for the Bureau of the Committee to convene without the representation of one of the regional groups, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. In accordance with rule 99 of the rules of procedure, the election of the Vice-Chairs of the Bureau should have taken place by the end of the first week of the current session at the latest.

The Committee also convened in violation of article 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, as it did not include the full representation of regional groups, thereby especially calling into question the principle of representativeness. The procedure for electing the remaining Vice-Chair, as called for by rule 103, should have been carried out by secret ballot. There was no consensus in our regional group for an endorsement. But the Secretariat should have told you, Mr. Chair, how the Committee should have proceeded to an election.

Mexico believes that the irregular nature of the session in which this Bureau has worked should not become a precedent. Equitable geographic representation is a United Nations principle. We must not allow this irregular situation to recur, especially when the General Assembly already provides a solution for such situations, even if it was not duly considered in this case.

Above and beyond that, Sir, we thank you for your outstanding work at the helm of the First Committee.

Mr. Sun Lei (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): This session of the First Committee is coming to an end after successful completion of the general debate and the taking of action on our agenda items. The Chinese delegation would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your leadership. We also thank the Bureau, the Secretariat and the interpreters for their hard work.

In the present international security environment, uncertainties and instabilities are on the rise. Every member of the international community should hold high the banner of multilateralism, work to enhance dialogue and cooperation and seek win-win solutions in the area of security. With a view to preserving the traditional multilateral disarmament machinery — the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission — we should seek to further safeguard international peace and security, promote multilateral arms control and

non-proliferation and build a win-win community for a shared future for humankind.

The Chinese delegation would like to thank various parties for their support of the draft resolution submitted by China and Russia, A/C.1/72/L.54, entitled “Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space”. We look forward to seeing everyone continuing to vote in favour of the draft resolution in the General Assembly. We hope to see everyone again, and we wish all our colleagues who are leaving New York a pleasant journey and those who are staying, all the best.

Mr. Guelaye (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The Group of Arab States would like to extend its sincere congratulations and appreciation to its sister Republic of Iraq for its outstanding and distinctive efforts in conducting and facilitating the work of the First Committee during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. It has helped us to achieve satisfactory results and the success that we hoped for this year.

Throughout the past month we have seen the impartiality, integrity, professionalism and wisdom of the Iraqi chairship at the helm of the First Committee. We can only repeat our thanks and express our sincere appreciation for the Chair’s outstanding performance and the worthy role played by the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations and the members of the Iraqi delegation. He has honoured us by representing the Group of Arab States for a second session in a row and assuming the chairship of this important Committee in the wake of the outstanding success of our sister Republic of Algeria in chairing it last year.

We would also like to sincerely thank and acknowledge all the members of the Committee’s Bureau and its secretariat, as well as the staff of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Finally, we must express our heartfelt gratitude to the delegations that supported the annual Arab draft resolution (A/C.1/72/L.2) entitled “Risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East”, thereby reflecting their commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations and to the maintenance of international peace and security, without double standards.

Ms. Jenie (Indonesia): On behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM), I am honoured to speak for the last time during this session of the First Committee in order to present our concluding remarks.

The Movement would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on completing the First Committee's work, and also expresses its gratitude to you and the members of the Bureau for your leadership at this session. NAM would also like to thank the First Committee's secretariat for its work in organizing the meetings and documentation, as well as assisting representatives.

We recognize that significant progress has been made in applying information technology to the work of the Committee, in particular in the use of the e-Delegate portal, which has managed to improve the efficiency of our work in the Committee. We therefore urge that the practice be continued in future sessions.

Of course, there is always room for improvement in some areas, particularly undertaking a thorough revision of the working methods of the meetings and improving time management by respecting the rules of procedure and avoiding future delays in the issuance of oral statements.

Lastly, NAM would like to thank all the States that supported the Movement's draft resolutions. The Movement remains resolute in continuing its constructive engagement to ensure the success of future sessions of the First Committee. Despite the many challenges in the area of disarmament this year — and most likely next year, too — it is incumbent on us to make progress. In that regard, NAM urges all of us to display greater political will and cooperation in our collective effort to ensure a more secure world.

Mr. Méndez Graterol (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation wishes to convey its heartfelt congratulations to you, Mr. Chair, on leading the work of the First Committee during this session. We also thank the other members of the Bureau, who have supported the Chair in carrying out the important and complex work that we have been engaged in over the past few weeks. I want to acknowledge the Chair's dedication and commitment and recognize the progress that has been made in that time. The work has been arduous, but I believe that the First Committee is concluding satisfied in the knowledge that we have done adequate work.

It was not my delegation's intention to take the floor but, having heard the comments made by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico, I must admit that I was surprised to hear him attempt to shift the blame for the lack of representation of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States in the Bureau to the Secretariat and, to a certain extent, to the Chair. I think that the responsibility for the absence of a Latin American representative on the Bureau of the Committee falls squarely on the countries that, for political reasons, blocked Venezuela's election as Vice-Chair of the Committee. I think that responsibility must be assumed, and that it is not appropriate to shift it to the Secretariat, which has done an excellent job. Last October, through the Chair of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, our delegation circulated a note clearly explaining the problem of the representation of Latin America in the Bureau. We regret the emergence and distortion of these types of situations, given the facts of the issue.

Finally, I once again convey our congratulations and our regret that certain remarks were made that called into question the integrity of the members of the Bureau and of the Secretariat. My country acknowledges all of the work of the Secretariat, its guidance and its support, and we commend it.

Ms. Sánchez Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation sincerely thanks you, Mr. Chair, for all of your efforts to advance the work of the First Committee. We also wish to thank the members of the Bureau, the Secretariat and you yourself, Mr. Chair, for their work and support in bringing the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

Secondly, although we would have preferred not to mention the matter, we fully supported the General Assembly's selection of Venezuela as the candidate to serve as Vice-Chair on the Bureau of the First Committee in order to represent the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee): I take the floor to respond to the comment directed to the Secretariat with regard to conduct of the work of the First Committee.

Rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly indicates that "[e]ach Main Committee

shall elect a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur”.

For the record, I also wish to inform the Committee that the Bureau of the Committee was fully constituted on 31 May 2017.

The Chair: I shall now give the floor to those delegations that wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Broilo (Poland): First of all, let me take this opportunity to cordially thank all the delegations that supported our draft resolution (A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1) this year. But I must also address the serious accusations of the politicization of the draft resolution. I must admit that, as a representative of a State sponsor of the draft resolution, I take those accusations to heart. I would like to firmly stress that the draft resolution is not about States. Rather, it is exclusively about the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. If there are positive developments in the implementation of the Convention, we do our best to properly reflect that in the text of the draft resolution.

For instance, this year we saw an achievement of the Russian Federation. We welcomed the destruction of chemical weapons, as declared by the Russian Federation. But, if there are serious problems in the implementation of the Convention, we will do exactly the same, regardless of the State concerned. That is the only way — openly, transparently and impartially — we can address the process of implementing the Convention.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor, but I must respond to comments made by the representative of the Russian Federation, who I notice has left. I assume he wanted to give his little lecture and run.

I would just like to say to our colleagues in his delegation that he should end the ridiculous propaganda that he brings into this room every year. His comments added absolutely nothing to the discussion. I suggest that he consider the vote on draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1. A large number of States spoke very loudly today on the draft resolution.

This is more in sorrow than in anger, but it is absolutely amazing and astonishing to see to what lengths the Russian Federation will go to defend the regime of Bashar Al-Assad. This was an important day and, as I said, the international community spoke very loudly. The draft resolution says a lot about the

international community's concerns about the Syrian victims, and I am proud to count myself as one of its supporters.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): It was suggested that the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) is led by British citizens. That is not the case; there are no British citizens in the leadership of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, and it is the latest report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (S/2017/904, annex) that we have been discussing, to a lesser or greater degree. I would encourage the States that questioned the evidence presented to take some time to read that report.

The Security Council, which unanimously agreed on the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, went to some length to satisfy itself that the processes that it would employ and the mandate for that would ensure an objective outcome. And that is what we believe we have in that report. The evidence is extremely well substantiated, and the concerns voiced by some are fully addressed in that report. Between now and the time that draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1 is voted on again, in December, perhaps the delegations that raised concerns about the evidence, or had yet to satisfy themselves about the integrity of that evidence, could look again at the report and reconsider their voting positions in December.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, my delegation would like to thank the delegations that voted against certain paragraphs of draft resolution A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1, and against the draft resolution as a whole. We also thank the delegations that abstained in the voting on certain paragraphs and on the draft resolution in its entirety.

The Al-Saud regime, which is a sponsor of terrorism around the world, has provided the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Nusra and related terrorist groups with toxic chemical substances and the means to transfer them. That results from the direct support of the Bandar bin Sultan Saudi organization and Turkish intelligence, and has made it possible for those groups to infiltrate Syria.

Time after time, representatives of the Israeli entity resort to hypocrisy. It is ironic that in this Committee there is a representative of Israel who makes accusations about other States, while her own country rejects the appeals of a majority of Member States that call on it to adhere to the conventions and treaties on weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, biological

and chemical weapons. Every report and study has documented beyond doubt Israel's repeated use of chemical and biological weapons, including the 2009 report (A/HRC/12/48) of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, and the fact that the Israeli entity threatened to use nuclear weapons during the 1973 war.

As usual, and in violation of all of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council on the fight against terrorism, Israel continues to provide every sort of assistance and support, weapons, munitions, information, intelligence and toxic chemical substances to terrorist organizations in Syria, particularly the Islamic State and Al-Nusra. Last week, our armed forces found Islamic State weapon depots filled with the most advanced Israeli weapons and munitions. That is what Israel is doing. It is a terrorist entity that cooperates as a matter of course with terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State and Al-Nusra.

My country condemns the fallacious, insidious and fabricated allegations put forward by the representative of France regarding the Khan Shaykhun incident, which demonstrated without any doubt France's involvement in that crime, its complicity in hostilities against Syria and its close links to terrorist organizations in Syria. France provides intelligence and delivers weapons, munitions and equipment to terrorist groups, including toxic chemical substances. As we have before, we call on the French representative to read the book *The Road to Damascus*, whose authors assert that former French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius was involved in the incident regarding the use of chemical weapons in eastern Ghouta in 2013.

The representative of Poland stated that he was affected by my statements. We understand the pressure that the Group of Western European and other States has brought to bear on the delegation of Poland, but that does not absolve it of its responsibility for presenting an imbalanced, politicized and biased draft resolution that focuses exclusively on making allegations about my country. Such country-specific draft resolutions have a place in other United Nations bodies, but not in the First Committee. The Polish delegation is responsible for this draft resolution. The mention of chlorine was redacted in the fourth preambular paragraph. Chlorine was an essential link in the draft resolution to terrorist groups in Syria, and featured in the latest report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) (S/2017/904, enclosure) once again this year.

The Polish delegation chose to omit that reference and replace it with a reference only to chemical weapons, including toxic chemical substances. The same is true for paragraphs 2 and 15, where the Polish delegation insisted on focusing on the latter.

If colleagues take a look at the report mentioned in paragraph 15, I suggest they also read the preceding paragraph, which confirms that progress has been made. But the Polish delegation refused our request to include that reference during our consultations on the draft resolution. It insisted on including language that undermines Syria's reputation. The Polish delegation is responsible for its decision, and we very much regret that it has transformed a consensus-based draft resolution that all delegations, including those of States not party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, have supported into a purely technical draft resolution. We understand the pressure brought to bear on the Polish delegation, but that does not exonerate it of its responsibility, especially as we mark the twentieth anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Denktaş (Turkey): This is not the first time that we have heard these incredible arguments from the Syrian delegation. I wish to remind everyone in the room that the international community established two independent bodies — the first was to investigate whether or not allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria were true. If so, the second body would determine who used them. The first body determined that such weapons were indeed used, while the second body has repeatedly stated that they were used by Da'esh and by the Syrian regime. Of course, the regime's representative here finds himself in an uncomfortable position and is trying to deflect blame by making ridiculous accusations. But those efforts have not worked, and will not work, as the results of today's vote have shown.

I encourage everyone to carefully consider the report (S/2017/904, annex) of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, which was translated into all the official United Nations languages yesterday. One of its annexes describes in great detail how the attack took place, explores all the possibilities and narrows them down to one scenario, which is that the regime was using chemical weapons.

Mr. Broilo (Poland): I can only repeat once again that our draft resolution (A/C.1/72/L.26/Rev.1) is not about States, it is about the implementation of the

Chemical Weapons Convention. Let me refer to just one part of the statement of the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, concerning paragraph 15.

I would like to draw the attention of delegations to document S/2017/916, which contains the text of a letter dated 30 October from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council. The letter includes a note by the Director General of Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme". Paragraph 10 of that document confirms what is stated in paragraph 15 of the current draft resolution.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am not going to argue with my Polish colleague. I referred to the report of the Director General, and I suggest that he read the paragraph that precedes the paragraph in question. After high-level consultations at The Hague, it mentions the progress made by Syrian authorities. But, for reasons that he knows very well, he refused to refer to that progress.

The representative of the Turkish regime always tries to deny its responsibility in the transfer of toxic chemical substances to Syria. In the past, my country has asked the Security Council, the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to demand information from Turkey regarding the sarin found on Turkish territory in the hands of 12 terrorists who were arrested and later released, while several judges and prosecutors were dismissed for trying to investigate that incident. That clearly reveals the involvement of the Turkish regime in the transfer of chemical substances to Syria and the preparations under way in Turkey to manufacture chemical weapons and use them in Syria.

The representative of Turkey mentioned the report of the JIM (S/2017/904, annex), which is full of contradictions and is unprofessional and untransparent. A paragraph in the report indicates that those who were wounded in the incident that took place between 6.30 and 7 in the morning were taken to a location 125 kilometres from the Turkish border, showing that scenarios are being fabricated by the Turkish regime in collaboration with other parties. In other words, the Turkish regime is not acting on its own. Other parties are acting in concert with Turkey or, more accurately, are paying Turkey to do so.

In addition, the Turkish regime shelters terrorists who move freely back and forth between Turkey and Syria and then leave for Europe. We have seen the results of what those terrorists have done in various European capitals. The regime designates witnesses and gives them sarin in order to ensure certain results.

We reject the JIM report outright, which does not even merit reading. It is not serious, has no integrity and reflects only Western views of my country.

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): The First Committee of the General Assembly convened in 2017 for its seventy-second session. We have been meeting as international security, disarmament and non-proliferation are facing a number of critical challenges. We witnessed some progress this year in the field of disarmament, despite the setbacks to the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

That was clearly and explicitly reflected in the general and thematic debates and in the decisions adopted by the First Committee this year. During the meetings and informal consultations, most delegations expressed grave concerns about the various challenges facing international security, especially those resulting from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). That was despite the differences between views and opinions regarding the proper approaches to disarmament and non-proliferation, especially nuclear disarmament, which were demonstrated beyond any doubt in the results of the voting on the draft resolutions relating to nuclear weapons. However, Member States' national statements made it very clear that they are all committed to nuclear disarmament and to working diligently to overcome the difficulties and impediments to finding common ground in the service of the lofty ultimate objective of a world free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs.

The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a clear expression of the grave concern of the international community about the current state of nuclear disarmament and of the common interest of numerous States in preventing the potentially catastrophic humanitarian effects and consequences of their use or threat of use. On a relevant note, the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons is an affirmation of the strong public demand for achieving the important objectives and results of nuclear disarmament.

The United Nations disarmament machinery faces many serious challenges. However, as this session has proved, numerous components are still viable and vital. The United Nations Disarmament Commission managed to achieve consensus during its 2017 session for the first time in almost two decades with regard to its substantive work, in this case, on a second agenda item, "Conventional weapons".

During this session, the Committee also considered a number of initiatives and proposals submitted to expert groups for their adoption. Broad concerns were voiced on issues that ranged from the prevention of an arms race in outer space to the problems resulting from the stockpiling of conventional munitions.

Developments in the field of science and technology provide numerous benefits for our societies, but we must make concerted efforts and work together to limit the risks and threats that they represent and to tackle the adverse effects of such rapid developments on peace and security, the disarmament regime and the non-proliferation and arms-control regimes.

Cybersecurity was a focus of the attention of the First Committee this year, as numerous ideas were exchanged about how to forge ahead and how to address the security aspects of cyberspace, despite the disappointing results in that regard of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security.

The Committee held 28 meetings during this session, throughout which I enjoyed the confidence and cooperation of all the delegations that I saw before me every morning and every afternoon working for the success of the session, enabling me as Chair to achieve success in those meetings. In that regard, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, her office staff and the Secretariat, who played a decisive role in ensuring the success of this session.

On behalf of all present, I would like to pay tribute to the outstanding work of the interpreters and conference staff, who have worked with us tirelessly for many hours. We certainly missed them after official working hours, when we could have used them to interpret the rights of reply from Russian and Arabic.

Finally, I would like to conclude by wishing those who are leaving New York a safe trip. I hope everyone continues their efforts to achieve the objectives of the First Committee, on which our collective security depends.

(spoke in English)

The main part of the seventy-second session of the First Committee is thus concluded. The Committee shall reconvene some time next year to elect its Chair and the other members of the Bureau for the seventy-third session.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.