



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

First Committee

5th meeting

Thursday, 5 October 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

first consider the draft decision contained in document A/C.1/72/CRP.4.

Organization of work

The Chair: Delegations may recall that a decision is still pending on document A/C.1/72/CRP.2, on the thematic segment of the work of the Committee. At the organizational meeting (see A/C.1/72/PV.1), I promised to undertake consultations on a proposed amendment to that document. On Monday, after the interventions of several delegations, I continued those consultations with the ultimate aim of reaching consensus on this important issue.

On 3 October, the delegation of Brazil circulated a draft decision (A/C.1/72/CRP.4) on the participation of the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) in the exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials.

Yesterday, in recognition of OPANAL's regional focus, the delegation of the United Kingdom proposed a compromise — the participation of the Secretary-General of OPANAL in the panel on regional disarmament and security to be held on Monday, 23 October. Let me say, as Chair of the Committee, that consensus on this matter is very important. I have tried my best to reach such consensus, because I strongly believe that the First Committee should adopt decisions on procedural matters by consensus.

In accordance with rules 130 and 131 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the Committee will

I shall first give the floor to delegations that wish to take the floor before we take action on document A/C.1/72/CRP.4.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): May I congratulate you, Sir, and Iraq on your assumption of the Chair.

The United States has a third alternative to propose on this matter, which has bedevilled us for a number of years now. Let me first say a few words by way of introduction.

With regard to the participation of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) in thematic debate we thought that the First Committee had come to a workable compromise at the previous session, namely, that the Secretary-General of OPANAL would be allowed to address the Committee informally during the exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials, which this year is scheduled for 11 October, and to do so from the civil society section of the meeting room.

The Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the Treaty of Tlatelolco — is an important regional disarmament and non-proliferation agreement. Nobody disputes that. Indeed, OPANAL is the Treaty's regional implementing body, and it does good work. It is an important regional institution.

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However, in all candour, OPANAL is not similar in composition or mandate to the global intergovernmental bodies currently on the high-level panel. We fail to understand why the nuclear-free-zone Treaty of Tlatelolco deserves special treatment and a special place on the panel. What about the other nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties in force in Africa, Central Asia, the South Pacific and South-East Asia? Do not the designated representatives of those agreements — equal in status to Tlatelolco, we think — deserve equal treatment? In the end, what we are talking about here is nothing less than the sovereign equality of equals, the coin of the realm of the United Nations.

In that spirit, we would like to propose a third alternative that puts all of the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties on an equal footing, because they are all equally important. I would like to read out our brief proposal for the consideration of colleagues. We fully agree with you, Sir, that consensus is critical. The problems that we face with regard to multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation are due not to consensus, but to a lack thereof. In many ways, we are moving away from a culture of consensus that for 50 years has undergirded multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation meetings and has yielded great results. It will do so again if we are patient and persistent. We should try for consensus here again on this issue, and then move forward.

I do not have it in writing yet, but we will be circulating it to all Member States in the afternoon. The proposal is as follows:

“Decides to invite representatives of the Bangkok, Pelindaba, Raritonga, Semipalatinsk and Tlatelolco nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties to participate as members of a new panel on the “Current state of affairs regarding nuclear-weapon-free zones”, to be held during the regional disarmament and security segment of the thematic debate on 23 October 2017.”

We put that proposal forward in the spirit of compromise and goodwill, to try and find a way forward. We think that all of the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties deserve equal status and equal billing. We think this is a viable way forward. The regional zones are exactly that — regional — and so it makes sense to have a discussion with them, and among them, during the regional segment. I look forward to discussing the proposal with colleagues.

The Chair: I inquire if the proposal is acceptable to delegations.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiola (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the United States delegation. We truly believe that its proposal is very good and creative. My delegation was unclear as to what type of veto or censure motion could be applied to a nuclear-weapon-free zone. It really made no sense to censure a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the First Committee. We were approaching absurdity, because it is absurd to oppose the participation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the work of the Committee.

We will analyse the proposal of the United States. We hope to receive a copy very soon. We understand that it does not wish to favour one nuclear-weapon-free zone over the rest. As members are aware, not all such zones have a Secretary-General, whereas Tlatelolco does. Consequently, the zones are different, at least in that respect. Nevertheless, the proposal of the United States is interesting, and we are very grateful. Perhaps we could add to the end of the proposal a phrase such as this:

(*spoke in English*)

“as appropriate in the work of the First Committee”;

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Something of the sort — “as appropriate” — would leave the door open for the future participation of the nuclear-weapon-free zones, which are extraordinarily relevant to the work of the Committee.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): As members will recall, on 28 September (see A/C.1/72/PV.1) and on 3 October (see A/C.1/72/PV.3), my delegation presented the request of the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) to take part as a panellist within the framework of the thematic discussion in the exchange of views between the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials from international organizations that are relevant in the field of disarmament. Since some delegations asked to see that request in writing, in the afternoon of 3 October I sent a letter in that regard with a draft decision attached, which was circulated to all First Committee members. The request has been supported by many delegations.

For the past three years, the States of Latin America and the Caribbean, which are all members of OPANAL, have expressed their strong support for the request of the Secretary-General of OPANAL to take part as a panellist in the framework of the thematic discussion in the exchange of views between the High Representative and other high-level officials. I would like to highlight that OPANAL meets the requirements for an entity to be considered an international organization under international law. It is composed of States, that is, it is intergovernmental in nature, and it was established by a treaty, namely, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is now 50 years old. In addition, it has a full degree of institutionalization, with a secretariat, a Council and a General Conference.

Brazil reiterates that the Secretary-General of OPANAL, as the international organization responsible for the implementation of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area, perfectly fulfils all the necessary criteria. OPANAL has played a key role in promoting peace and stability in our region. We are confident that it could provide a valuable contribution to the discussions related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including offering the perspective of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. That perspective is particularly relevant this year as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and at a time when the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is one of the most pressing issues on the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

I would also like to point out that we would be supportive of requests by other nuclear-weapon-free zones to include their representatives on the panel. This is the fourth consecutive year in which OPANAL and its member States have presented this request to the Chair of the First Committee. Although it was met with broad support when it was presented on previous occasions, it was not granted the first two times — and only partially granted last year, when the Secretary-General of OPANAL was allowed to speak after the exchange of views.

Given that more than 36 hours have elapsed since the circulation of our written proposal to the membership, we request that the First Committee take action on it now. It is Brazil's sincere hope that this year will produce a different result and that the Committee will decide by consensus to have OPANAL fully represented

on the panel and given the opportunity to participate in the interactive dialogue with delegations. The fact that OPANAL does not have universal membership should not prevent it from taking part on the panel. As I mentioned, it fulfils the criteria for an entity to be legally considered an international organization — which is not true of all the entities already represented, as the treaty that established one of them is not yet in force. Additionally, none of the entities represented have universal membership, but that in no way diminishes the value of their contributions. As such, I ask for action on our proposal now.

The Chair: There is now a new proposal before the Committee. I ask that the United States circulate its proposal in writing and that the Committee consider it at a later date.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): No, we would not like to postpone the decision on our proposal. We would like to have it addressed and decided now.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): At your request, Mr. Chair, we will expeditiously move to circulate our proposal in writing to all Member States. We hope that it will be given consideration fairly, before we move to act as a Committee on this issue, and that it will not be swept aside. We think it is a very democratic proposal, and we would like to proceed in a democratic way on this issue.

Mr. Hansen (Australia): I want to lend our support to the Chair's proposal that we be given time to look at the proposal that the United States has put forward. As members know, last year Australia was on the Bureau as the representative of the Group of Western European and other States, where we worked extremely hard to broker a consensus decision with the interested parties on this particular matter. It would be of grave concern if we went down the path of having to take a vote. I think another reasonable proposal has been put forward at this stage, and all Member States will probably need to get some instructions on it. There is a new dynamic in play this morning, and therefore we very much support the Chair's efforts to reach a compromise and further discussions.

Mr. Luque Márquez (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of the United States for its proposal. The idea is not new. It has already been discussed, not directly in the context of the First Committee but definitely informally among Committee members one or two years ago — when the notion of

including the Secretary-General for the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) on a panel first emerged.

Unfortunately, this proposal, like those in previous years on the participation of OPANAL, were set aside and not considered by the Committee. That is why I understand that the United States representative does not want his new proposal — which, again, is not really new — to be set aside. However, I ask the Committee to consider the fact that in the past three years the proposal, made by the 33 States members of OPANAL, was indeed set aside in the service of consensus, harmony in the Committee and 20 years' worth of a tradition that has not led to interactive discussions in the panels.

At any rate, there are some practical questions with regard to the United States proposal. As the Permanent Representative of Brazil has already pointed out, OPANAL is an entity — born of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — that administers the nuclear-weapon-free zone. It is unique in that sense. Other zones have different structures, but OPANAL is an intergovernmental international organization with a Secretary-General who administers the Latin America and the Caribbean nuclear-weapon-free zone. We would need to see how that matches up with the other nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Nevertheless, we believe that the participation of the nuclear-weapon-free zones would be of great interest. But some practical questions remain. Could such a special panel be convened this year? Perhaps it would be better — and this would entail proposing another compromise — to seriously consider the proposal of convening a nuclear-weapon-free zone panel starting next year, such that each zone could decide what State or entity would represent it. In the case of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, that decision is clear: OPANAL has a Secretary-General. Every such zone has its own structure.

I do not see how it could be done this year. That is why this year we should accede to Brazil's petition, which Ecuador supports, of having the Secretary-General of OPANAL participate in the panel on 11 October, and consider whether, as part of the Committee's working methods, we should convene a nuclear-weapon-free zone panel starting next year. As it is, we are barely two weeks away from the holding of such a panel, and

I am not sure it could be organized in time, the way we would like to see it.

If I may, I would make one more general comment on the working methods. For some years now, we have discussed the utility of the panels, how interactive they are, to what degree they are permanent fixtures and to what degree they have become a very stylized Kabuki theatre — and I say that with great respect, as I very much enjoy Kabuki — that evoke no reactions. Let us make the panels a bit more interactive, a bit more topical and a bit more in touch with reality.

I do not oppose the United States proposal, as it seems interesting, but I think it could be implemented only starting at the Committee's next session. As a true compromise, therefore, let us take a step this year as a sign of respect for the 33 OPANAL member States and allow the Secretary-General of OPANAL to participate in the panel that will be held on 11 October.

Mr. Weisz (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you, Sir, for your efforts to find consensus on this important issue. We also welcome the proposal of our United States colleague. It seems to be a reasonable proposal that could likely achieve consensus. We also echo the statement of our Australian colleague in asking for some time to consult with our capitals with regard to the proposal.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): I would like to thank the United States delegation for its proposal. We can examine that issue in future. Nevertheless, I add my voice to that of the representative of Ecuador. I believe that we have to act now on our proposal. It is high time that we accept the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which, as the representative of Ecuador stressed and as I said in my first statement, is a full-fledged international organization. We do not see any reason that it should have to speak in a secondary or later panel that does not have the same actors nor the same status. We would like to see the United States proposal. However, we would like to act on our proposal, which was presented well before.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. Chair, for taking us through this exercise and for your patience.

I would like to request to know, via the secretariat, the status of the participants on the panel at which the

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs will be present.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Wang Xiaoyu (Acting Secretary of the Committee): The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs sent invitations for this particular panel on behalf of the Bureau of the First Committee. As of today, Mr. Michael Møller, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, will participate via video link from Geneva. The other international organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, have designated their representatives in New York to participate on their behalf. As for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Director General has designated one of his senior staff members to represent him in the panel discussion.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the secretariat. It would seem, then, that the level of attendance at the forthcoming panel, where the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs will be present, is not too significantly different from the panel on 23 October on regional disarmament. Therefore, the concern regarding the stature of the two panels is not too significantly different. Perhaps that concern is unfounded.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiola (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): In support of what the representative of Brazil has indicated, we believe that the United States proposal, as my delegation just pointed out, is a good proposal that can be considered in future because it is a supplemental proposal.

In fact, my delegation is surprised that the time of the First Committee is being devoted to such a basic discussion. If we are rejecting the participation of an organization of Member States in a panel, then frankly we are not doing very well as the First Committee, wasting so much of the interpreters' and representatives' time on such a minor topic. We simply cannot understand the blocking of an intergovernmental organization. I believe that the Brazilian Ambassador is right. His proposal is on the table and should be acted upon.

The second point is that the United States proposal is both interesting and supplemental, as it would open the door to the participation of the nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Committee and would additionally preclude

us from discussing this matter — on the participation of the nuclear-weapon-free zones — in future. In our view, it is truly absurd to be wasting time on this issue.

Mr. Benaud (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. Chair, for all of your efforts to date to build consensus among Member States. We also thank the United States delegation for the proposal it made today.

As the Permanent Representative of Guatemala indicated yesterday in his statement (see A/C.1/72/PV.4), from our perspective, promoting nuclear-weapon-free zones helps implement the three foundational pillars of the Charter of the United Nations. In various forums, both in the General Assembly and the Security Council, we have managed to adopt by consensus important definitions such as sustaining peace on the ground. Guatemala believes that the implementation of the three foundational pillars of the Charter helps us sustain that peace. The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zone has a direct impact on those foundational pillars.

As such, we regret that we must resort to taking a vote on a topic of such importance to various delegations. We understand that we are not in the Security Council, where veto right may be exercised. The First Committee has the means to make democratic and transparent decisions. That is why we support the request made by the representative of Brazil. We believe that the proposal is reasonable, timely and transparent. We therefore support and echo the sentiment of Brazil that the Committee take action on the proposal it presented some days ago.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I will try to be brief. I simply want to thank my colleagues from France, the United Kingdom and Australia, as well as my colleagues from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, for engaging on this issue.

As far as my delegation is concerned, we are not here to vote against anyone. We are trying to practice a politics of inclusion in our proposal. The panel that we proposed would necessarily include the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Our colleague from Ecuador noted that the other nuclear-weapon-free zones are not as institutionalized in terms of the implementing bodies and such, but that does not make them any less important or any less equal in the eyes of the international community. Half

of the world is represented by nuclear-weapon-free zones, and those representatives are in this room right now. It would be up to the States parties of the zones themselves to decide who would represent them — as far as the mechanics of the panel we are proposing and having an engaging discussion on the current state of affairs regarding their zone and other zones, *inter alia*.

That is the point of this exercise and the point of our proposal. We do not want to vote against anyone. We are deeply concerned that we are deciding to vote on this issue at all. This is not an issue that should be voted on. We should come together and try to seek a compromise. The United States proposal is meant to forge that compromise. I think that engaging in a frontal assault, yet again, on the concept and practice of consensus will have profound implications for our work here. This has been a concerning state of affairs in other multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation bodies and processes in the past, and now the chickens have come home to roost here in the First Committee.

On draft resolutions, of course, we vote. However, the goal for all draft resolutions is that they be adopted without a vote. The goal is consensus and consensus-building. That is the goal of the American proposal. I hope that Governments will be given an opportunity to think about it in the context of the other proposals on the table, and that we do not move ahead precipitously. We have some time to get this right, to build bridges and to forge compromise. The thematic debate is not scheduled to begin until the middle of next week, so we have a little time. I suggest that we take it, for the good of everyone.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): As I said before, we welcome the proposal of the United States. Our goal is also to reach a decision on this issue by consensus. I totally agree with the remarks of the Permanent Representatives of Ecuador, Mexico and Guatemala. In our region we are totally in agreement with this request.

I do not see any reason not to invite the Secretary-General of a well-established and the oldest organization in this area to take part in a very important panel with the High Representative of the Secretary-General and other officials who are not the heads of each of the organizations represented. I do not see any reason to put the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean or of other regional organizations on a different panel where they will not have an

opportunity to interact with the High Representatives and the middle-rank officials — as the representative of the Secretariat said — of the other organizations, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and others.

Therefore, since we presented our proposal more than two days ago and it has been circulated, I insist on taking action on our proposal now. Later, of course, we will be open to discussing proposals presented today. We still have time for it, but we would like action on our proposal now.

The Chair: It is clear that there is no consensus on this issue. The delegation of Brazil is asking for action today on its proposal. Frankly, I would like to have consensus on this matter. However, the main sponsor of the draft decisions contained in document A/C.1/72/CRP.4 would like action today.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): We have heard you, Mr. Chair. If you have made the decision to proceed with the vote, we are in your hands. We find it deeply regrettable. I think it is quite telling that we are proceeding in this manner. What we will do to avoid any further discord is to withdraw the American proposal, since a democratic and consensual way forward clearly is not in the offing. We withdraw the American proposal and we, at least, will not insist on a vote on this issue. But let it be known that this delegation tried to find a way forward and to build bridges with every other delegation in this room, and we were rebuffed.

I hope that in future we do not engage in force majeure on seemingly procedural matters. But underneath the surface it is all about politics. That is the state of affairs that the First Committee finds itself in, and we find that deeply regrettable. In any case, we do not insist on a vote and we withdraw our proposal. We are in your hands, Mr. Chair, as we move forward.

The Chair: The Committee will now take a decision on the draft decision contained in document A/C.1/72/CRP.4, entitled “Participation in panel in the exchange with the High Representative of Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials”.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): My delegation put forward an alternative yesterday. We feel it is a fair alternative. We do not follow the argumentation presented by the proposer of this draft decision, and I oppose the decision.

Mr. Kodellas (Greece): I would like to appeal to all colleagues to avoid a vote. This is a procedural matter, and we should proceed by consensus.

The Chair: May I seek clarification? Is the representative of the United Kingdom asking for a vote?

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): I am not asking for a vote. I am opposing consensus.

The Chair: May I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the draft decisions contained in document A/C.1/72/CRP.4?

It was so decided.

The Chair: I now call on the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): Perhaps I was not clear. I understood the decision was put forward for a consensual adoption. I opposed the consensus.

The Chair: I said, "May I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the draft decisions contained in document A/C.1/72/CRP.4?"

I now call on the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): My understanding is that the Committee would need to adopt it by consensus, and this delegation stands in the way of that consensus. We feel that we have put forward a fair alternative that has been given no credence. We have heard another alternative put forward today. As such, this delegation maintains that it cannot accept document A/C.1/72/CRP.4.

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

Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee): I take the floor to clarify the procedure with respect to action on draft proposals. In the absence of a request for a vote, the Committee proceeds to take action on any proposal without a vote. That has always been the tradition in the First Committee and in the General Assembly. Therefore, unless there is a specific request for a vote, the Committee proceeds on the basis of adoption without a vote.

The Chair: I now call on the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): I request a five-minute recess.

The Chair: I shall now suspend the meeting for five minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 11.05 a.m. and resumed at 11.10 a.m.

The Chair: I now call on the representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowland (United Kingdom): I extend my apologies to my colleagues for the delay. I am grateful to you, Mr. Chair, and to the Secretariat for explaining the situation to me, that you have gavelled a decision and that the decision is final. It was never the intention of this delegation to call for a vote. We do not believe that votes have a place in decision-making on procedural matters within this Committee. My delegation abides by the decision as gavelled.

The Chair: We shall now proceed to consider the draft indicative timetable contained in document A/C.1/72/CRP.2, taking into account the decision just taken on the participation of the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean in the exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials on Wednesday, 11 October.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to proceed in accordance with the draft indicative timetable contained in document A/C.1/72/CRP.2, as amended?

It was so decided.

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

General debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items

The Chair: Before I open the floor for statements, delegations are reminded that the list of speakers is now open for the thematic discussion segment, which will start next week on Wednesday, 11 October.

I urge all delegations taking the floor today to kindly keep in mind the suggested time limit for statements. I encourage delegations to read their statements at a reasonable speed to give enough time for interpretation.

Mr. Cooreman (Belgium): First of all, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at this session. I want to assure you of the full support of my delegation in the implementation of your mandate.

Belgium fully aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/72/PV.2). I wish to add a number of points of particular importance to my delegation.

The challenges to the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime today are formidable. One country is making rapid strides towards establishing an operational nuclear capability of its own. Belgium unequivocally condemns North Korea's advancing ballistic missile and nuclear programme, including the nuclear test carried out in September. We call on North Korea to finally change its course, to comply with the resolutions of the Security Council and to take the necessary steps towards denuclearization.

Every North Korean test reminds us of the crucial importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). That is the only way to enforce a global and definitive ban on nuclear testing, verified by an international organization. Without the CTBT, the risk that new and more powerful nuclear weapons will be developed remains greater. Only a world without nuclear testing can lead to a world without nuclear weapons. As current co-Chairs of the article XIV process, Belgium and Iraq will undertake a number of initiatives to encourage adhesion to the Treaty and to facilitate its entry into force.

When faced with current non-proliferation challenges, it is worth recalling that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran demonstrates how seemingly irreconcilable differences can be overcome by the strength of multilateral diplomacy when it is guided by a shared vision and underpinned by collective action. We wish to underline the importance of the continued implementation of that nuclear agreement by all sides.

We cannot be satisfied by the current pace of nuclear disarmament. The last major nuclear arms control agreement dates back to 2010. Nuclear arsenals are being modernized. New nuclear capabilities are being added, with potentially destabilizing effects. Nuclear-weapon States, and particularly those with the largest arsenals, need to undertake further action, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Despite the setback of the 2015 Review Conference, we still have an agreed framework to move forward, namely, the 2010 Action Plan. Stockpile reductions of all types of nuclear weapons should be coupled with policy steps

to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in defence doctrines. Warning and decision times for the launch of nuclear weapons should be increased, thereby reducing the risk of accidental or unauthorized attacks.

Belgium has supported United Nations resolutions to that effect. Those resolutions are a reminder of the responsibility that both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States share in the realization of the objective of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We all have our role to play in fostering the conditions conducive to effective progress towards disarmament. Creating an appropriate security environment is one element; building trust and confidence is another.

The international division over the path forward for nuclear disarmament has deepened, and some principles of our common approach have been called into question. Belgium doubts that the recently concluded Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will foster progress. As a political instrument, it lacks the support of the main stakeholders. As a disarmament instrument, it lacks the prerequisites to be effective, such as a verification regime to ensure compliance and deter infraction. Moreover, as the Treaty declares its primacy over other international agreements, it risks weakening some basic components of the global non-proliferation regime, especially when it is interpreted as offering a less burdensome alternative. The Treaty's provisions regarding nuclear tests put it at odds with the CTBT and could complicate the entry into force of the latter. The Treaty also proposes a safeguards regime that is below the current gold standard. We continue to view the additional protocol as an essential tool to prevent the use of undeclared nuclear material for illegal weapon programmes.

As the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons does not reinforce the global non-proliferation regime, Belgium will not sign it. While we disagree with other States on the issue, we remain ready to cooperate with all stakeholders to jointly further our goal of a world without nuclear weapons. Polarization will not bring us any closer to that objective. Diverging views on one issue should not block us from making progress on others. Nor should this issue contaminate debates on unrelated affairs.

We remain convinced that the progressive approach provides a realistic path towards nuclear disarmament, that is, a gradual process based on mutually reinforcing

building blocks. Regrettably, many elements have been blocked for years, and we need renewed political will to reinvigorate them. In that regard, we welcome and support the actions to move forward on the issue of a fissile material cut-off treaty through the establishment of the High-Level Expert Preparatory Group. The issue of nuclear disarmament verification will likewise benefit from the input of a group of governmental experts. Such actions in the United Nations framework can be complemented by plurinational initiatives, such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, of which my country is a member.

Chemical weapons are the only weapon of mass destruction employed in conflict during the twenty-first century. Their re-emergence on the battlefield, 100 years after their first use in Belgium, is an intolerable blemish for humankind. As was recalled in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Centennial Commemoration of the First Large-Scale Use of Chemical Weapons, issued at Ieper, Belgium, two years ago, any use of chemical weapons is totally unacceptable and violates the norms and standards of the international community. The fact that a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention has used this weapon against its own population serves as a grim reminder that the strength of a treaty depends on compliance by its State parties and that declared commitments have to be assessed through robust verification. Belgium calls upon Syria to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and to shed full light on its chemical weapons programme. We reconfirm our confidence in the impartiality and expertise of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, which needs to determine responsibility for the horrendous chemical attacks in Syria. That crucial work should be extended beyond its current mandate.

Let me add a final word on our working methods. Every year, the Committee gathers as a unique forum to enable all United Nations States Members to address the full range of non-proliferation and disarmament issues. The breadth of our agenda is reflected not only in a wealth of statements, debates and side-events, but also in a yearly expanding compendium of resolutions and declarations. Although we should not shy away from voicing our opinions, we must also avoid losing focus or subordinating action to rhetoric. We must ask the whether a yearly repetition of the same resolutions that have only undergone technical updates serves the

purpose of the Committee. Moreover, do we need to request reports annually from the Secretary-General on the same draft resolutions, especially if those reports do not provide us with new insights? Practical steps can be taken with a view to improving working methods, such as biennializing or triennializing draft resolutions and refraining from systematically requesting reports from the Secretariat.

Mr. Sukhee (Mongolia): At the outset, let me join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee and to assure you and members of the Bureau of our delegation's full support.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.2).

After more than 70 years, from the very first General Assembly resolution (resolution 1 (I)) up until the recently negotiated Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, global nuclear disarmament and the overall objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons continues to be characterized by an impasse. Against the backdrop of considerable challenges to disarmament and non-proliferation and tensions at the global and regional levels, the international community has once again demonstrated that progress is both possible and desirable. In that regard, the adoption of the Treaty in July 2017 marked a significant step forward in outlawing and gradually eliminating nuclear weapons.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime and an essential part of the global security regime. Pursuant to the NPT, the nuclear-weapon States have a legal obligation to not only pursue but also bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament, under a strict and effective international verification system. It is regrettable that at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty we could not reach an outcome document that would further build on the consensual final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The successful convening of the Conference represents an essential part of the NPT. Hence, efforts should be made to avoid another such stalemate in the current review cycle.

We are fully convinced that only a world free of nuclear weapons can guarantee a safer future for

humankind, which is indispensable for the fulfilment of the principal aims of peace, security and development. This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, and in commemoration of that occasion Secretary-General António Guterres and the President of Mongolia exchanged messages. The Secretary-General said:

“As Mongolia celebrates 25 years of the declaration of its nuclear-weapon-free status, that unique status is a testament to its patient and productive engagement with its neighbours in pursuit of nuclear-weapon-free status and the benefits of such diplomatic initiatives. Over the past five decades, efforts towards establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones worldwide have covered almost 60 per cent of the United Nations membership. Such zones are valuable, concrete steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons. These initiatives have helped to build regional trust and confidence by facilitating dialogue among neighbours and with the nuclear-weapon States. They have contributed to the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and to regional and international stability and security.”

As a result of its consistent efforts and the support of the international community, the nuclear-weapon-free status of Mongolia today enjoys broad international recognition, and its unique status has been recognized as a contribution to nuclear non-proliferation and the promotion of regional confidence and predictability. Mongolia values the 2012 joint declaration by the five permanent members of the Security Council as a basis of its nuclear security policy. As a responsible member of the international community, Mongolia will continue its efforts to help lead the way to a more peaceful and prosperous world by further consolidating its international security and nuclear-weapon-free status. I would like to reiterate my Government's strong support for nuclear-weapon-free zones and to reaffirm that Mongolia will continue its cooperation efforts with the United Nations and Member States in strengthening the non-nuclear aspects of its security that would contribute to stability, greater regional confidence and mutually beneficial cooperation in and beyond the region.

The repeated nuclear tests and launching of ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea — in defiance of the international community's will and in violation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council — poses a grave threat to international peace and security. As a country with a 25-year nuclear-

weapon-free zone status, Mongolia reiterates its principled position that the Korean peninsula must be nuclear-weapon-free. Mongolia renews its call for the maintenance of peace and security in North-East Asia and for resolving the issue through peaceful means.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is the only legally binding assurance against the recurrence of nuclear testing. It is urgently awaited by the international community. Mongolia is firmly committed to the early entry into force of the CTBT and its subsequent implementation. Mongolia considers the verification system to be the core of the CTBT, in particular the International Monitoring System. Mongolia is proud to host three geophysical monitoring stations and commends the efforts of the Preparatory Commissions in completing and installing the system's final hydroacoustic station HA04, after nearly 20 years of hard work. It is crucial that we continue to build and maintain the system so that it is fully operational when the Treaty enters into force. As a party to the NPT and the CTBT, Mongolia takes every opportunity to promote the importance of the CTBT.

As for the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue Initiative on Northeast Asian Security, Mongolia strives to bolster regional efforts and talks aimed at promoting peace and security in the North-East Asia region. The Dialogue is an open mechanism that encourages the participation of all countries in North-East Asia in exchanging ideas and views in order to build mutual trust and understanding. We organized the Initiative's fourth international conference in Ulaanbaatar last June, with a focus on policy options to improve the current security situation in the region. Over 150 representatives from countries in the region and international organizations participated.

Mongolia recognizes the value of multilateralism, underscores the importance of convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and supports the convening of a 2018 United Nations high-level conference on nuclear disarmament to review the progress made in that regard. It is our sincere hope that we will be able to achieve concrete progress on this year's disarmament and non-proliferation agenda to strengthen international peace and security.

Mr. Molnár (Hungary): Let me join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. Chair, on assuming

your very important post and to assure you of the full support of my delegation.

Hungary associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/72/PV.2). I will therefore make only a few remarks from our national perspective.

The year behind us was marked by various challenges to the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime — suffice it to mention the nuclear and missile tests conducted in the Korean peninsula and the use of chemical weapons against the civilian population in Syria. Those flagrant violations of international legal norms and relevant Security Council resolutions represent a threat not only to regional but also global security. They serve as a strong reminder that the international community should do its utmost to strengthen and, whenever possible, further develop the global non-proliferation and disarmament machinery.

Against that background, we note with satisfaction that the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) took place in a constructive atmosphere, lending positive impetus to the new review cycle of the Treaty, which remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and, through its article VI, the only realistic framework for multilateral nuclear disarmament. Consequently, the NPT must be built upon, rather than weakened or neglected.

As far as the ultimate goal of multilateral nuclear disarmament is concerned, we are convinced that it can be achieved only through a gradual and inclusive process and taking concrete and practical steps that fully engage the nuclear-weapon States and, at the same time, promote international security and stability. It is our firm view that any new legal instrument that does not meet those requirements cannot have any practical effect. There is no fast-track in this area; only an incremental approach can produce tangible progress.

One of the essential building blocks of such an incremental approach is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as there can be no meaning for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation without a comprehensive and total ban of nuclear testing. Therefore, there is no alternative to or substitute for the CTBT. With its reliable International Monitoring System, the CTBT is a unique asset that not only needs to be maintained but properly financed and

further developed. In the current international security context, as confirmed in Security Council resolution 2310 (2016), the CTBT is more relevant and its entry into force is more needed than ever.

Another concrete step towards a world free of nuclear weapons would be starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty that bans the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear-explosive devices. Concluding a non-discriminatory, multilateral, international and effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty would also constitute a significant contribution to the implementation of the NPT. We are pleased by the reports that the first session of the High-level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group, set up last year, was held in a constructive atmosphere, under its able Canadian chairmanship.

Yet another missing building block towards the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons is the existence of effective and reliable verification and monitoring mechanisms and instruments. We share the view that nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States should work together to create such verification tools by the time the necessary conditions are in place for the conclusion of new multilateral and nuclear disarmament agreements. Therefore, Hungary fully supports resolution 71/67 and wishes to contribute to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts established by the Secretary-General.

We are pleased by the outcome of the third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which opened a new chapter in the existence of ATT. Having laid the foundation of the Treaty, State parties must focus on fulfilling their Treaty obligations in the most efficient and transparent manner possible, especially when it comes to reporting. Although the universalization of the Treaty is progressing relatively well, there is a particular need to reach out to major arms exporters in order to turn the ATT into a real milestone in the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms. Let me thank Finland for its leadership in preparing a successful Conference of States Parties. I would also like to offer our support to the incoming Japanese presidency. We are confident that it will also increase momentum for its universalization in Asia.

This year, as we mark the twentieth anniversary of its adoption, let me reiterate that Hungary attaches

great importance to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, as well as to the objectives of the Maputo Declaration. As a manifestation of our support for the Convention, last year we made a voluntary contribution to the functioning of the Implementation Support Unit.

Although the Convention made considerable progress in the past two decades, unfortunately we have recently witnessed an increase in the number of newly mined contaminated areas and countries, which poses a serious threat to the civilian population. It is only by reversing that trend and working relentlessly to fulfil the commitments undertaken under the Convention, as well as by making further progress towards universalizing the Convention, that the ultimate goal of a mine-free world can be achieved by 2025.

Hungary appreciates the successful outcome of the fifth Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which plays an important role in enforcing the norms of international humanitarian law in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and in responding to challenges posed by new technologies. We attach great importance to Amended Protocol II, and in particular to the issue of improvised explosive devices and to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems. We are pleased that, despite the alarming financial situation of the Geneva-based disarmament treaties, all important issues can be addressed in November.

In conclusion, let me remind delegations that, following the practice of previous years, Hungary has prepared a draft resolution on the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), which is a fundamental pillar of the international community's efforts against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We trust that, as has been the case every year so far, the draft resolution will again be adopted by consensus at this session. It is all the more important this year to adopt a draft resolution on the BWC to serve as an important stepping stone and send a positive message to this year's Meeting of States Parties, mandated by the eighth Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention to reach consensus on a substantive intersessional process for the period before the next Review Conference. By doing so, we can collectively recommit ourselves to the prevention and further strengthening of the Convention

and its relevance in a rapidly changing political and scientific environment.

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

Mr. Khamis (United Republic of Tanzania): The delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania wishes to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of Bureau on your well-deserved elections. They have our full confidence and assurances of our cooperation and support.

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Nigeria and Indonesia on behalf of the Group of African States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively (see A/C.1/72/PV.2). Please allow me to make some remarks in my national capacity.

First, the successful negotiation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons provided new political and legal impetus for the disarmament machinery. On 7 July, the majority of Member States adopted the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which places such weapons in the same category as other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) under international law. The Treaty has been open for countries' signing since 20 September. The United Republic of Tanzania looks forward to signing and ratifying it, in keeping with its own laws.

Secondly, my delegation underscores that the Treaty complements the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to which Tanzania is a State party. However, we stress that disarmament efforts must not hamper the inalienable rights of developing countries to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. In that regard, we note the important role being played by the International Atomic Energy Agency in implementing safeguards for the verification of nuclear programmes and the application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Thirdly, the United Republic of Tanzania has long been cognizant of the presence of weapons of mass destruction and of the grave threat that their existence poses to the peace and security of our nation, our continent and our world. In that regard, we continue to stress the need for the international community to

strengthen measures that prevent non-State actors, including terrorists, from gaining access to WMDs.

Fourthly, we remain deeply concerned about the illicit trade, stockpiling and transfer of small arms and light weapons, including their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world. These weapons fuel and prolong conflicts, environmental crimes — which include the killing of endangered species such as elephants — and organized crime, such as drug trafficking, violent crimes and terrorism. In that regard, we remain fully committed to effective multilateral efforts aimed at combating the illicit trade in and proliferation of conventional weapons and their munitions. We welcome the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, which the United Republic of Tanzania signed on 3 June 2013.

Fifthly, the United Republic of Tanzania believes in the importance of outer space and its uses for peaceful purposes and is deeply concerned about the ongoing arms race, such as with regard to the deployment of ballistic missile systems in space, and its implications for the security of space and humankind on Earth. My delegation calls upon the international community to highlight the importance of strict compliance with the relevant disarmament agreements and the existing legal regime concerning outer space.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to underscore that disarmament and development are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. It is clearly documented that using funds to stockpile heavy weapons that are rarely used is a drain on national and world economies. In that regard, we urge countries to consider investing in raising the living standards of their peoples, which could also reverse the current intense irregular migration from South to North that results from poverty and hopelessness.

Ms. Haile (Eritrea): At the outset, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections to steer the work of this important Committee. I want to assure you of my delegation's full support in the conduct of our business.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/72/PV.2).

Eritrea firmly believes that international peace and security can be guaranteed only through stable and inclusive global economic and social development, as well as full respect for the Charter of the United Nations, international law and treaty obligations. Peace and security are a shared global responsibility, and no country alone can secure its borders from all threats. Stronger multilaterally negotiated, transparent, comprehensive and non-discriminatory instruments and international cooperation are crucial for effective and long-term results in regional and international security and disarmament objectives. In that regard, Eritrea reiterates its commitment to disarmament and international security, as disarmament can be achieved only on a multilateral basis.

Nearly all of the conflicts facing our world today are directly or indirectly linked to the widespread availability of illicit small arms and light weapons and their ammunition across all countries and regions. Correspondingly, the negative impact on people living under conflict or areas experiencing pervasive crimes cannot be overemphasized. The major impact of illicit small arms and light weapons proliferation is felt in developing countries, particularly in countries where State control is weak or non-existent. And we continue to note with serious concern that terrorist groups and criminal networks are taking advantage of those security gaps. In that connection, we must stand against steps or actions that undermine the security and stability of countries. Our actions must be guided by respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States, as well as their right to self-defence. Those principles are enshrined in the Charter.

Eritrea wishes to reiterate that the main challenge regarding small arms and light weapons is related not to the illicit use of arms by civilians or non-State actors, but rather to the existence of unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war from several decades of wars in Eritrea, including the Second World War. Local studies estimate that over 1.5 million mines were laid throughout the country during that period. In only the 10-year period that followed Eritrea's official independence in 1993, a total of 700 tons of explosive remnants of war were disposed of and destroyed. As a nation that recently emerged from more than 30 years of a war for independence and respect for its sovereign national territory, Eritrea is among the countries to have experienced the horrors of war. In that regard, we attach

great importance to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and to its full implementation.

The proliferation and misuse of small arms are a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that transcends political boundaries and requires a regional and international solution. As such, the Government of the State of Eritrea is carrying out its obligations, consistent with its commitments under the 2009 Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa and the 2004 Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. Those instruments are based on the principles enshrined in the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and other relevant international mechanisms. Currently, the Government of the State of Eritrea is working on a national action plan on small arms and light weapons that takes into account the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan of the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States.

Eritrea is deeply concerned about the lack of meaningful progress in the field of nuclear disarmament. We were recently reminded of how dangerous nuclear weapons can be. They continue to pose the greatest danger to humankind and to the survival of civilization. Eritrea believes that humankind's only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is the total and irreversible elimination of such weapons. Eritrea firmly believes that legally binding negative security assurances, the establishment of nuclear-weapon free zones and the universalization and early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are critical steps towards general and complete nuclear disarmament. Eritrea attaches high importance to the role played by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in maintaining international peace and security and reiterates its support for all three pillars of the NPT.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to stress that weapons only fuel insecurity, and disarmament is the only viable tool for a secure planet that is home to all humankind.

Mr. Phansourivong (Lao People's Democratic Republic): I wish to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. I assure you of our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your duties.

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (see A/C.1/72/PV.2).

Despite the fact that the majority of Member States aspire to see a world without nuclear weapons and that disarmament and non-proliferation have been at the top of the agenda of the work of the United Nations for many years, progress remains elusive. It is apparent that the arms race is being revived, bringing with it a greater threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), due to the current state of highly advanced technology and modernized weaponry. As such, one could say that we are living in a less secure world. The situation urgently calls for all of us to have firmer political will to address the crucially important issue of disarmament and non-proliferation in order to make tangible progress in the field by building mutual trust and confidence to ensure mutual security for the entire world.

The continued existence of WMDs, particularly nuclear weapons, remains a matter of serious concern when it comes to international peace and security because, as long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of an accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional nuclear-weapon detonation remains, thereby exposing humankind and the environment to their catastrophic effects. Therefore, we are convinced that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. In that connection, my delegation welcomes the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, on 7 July at the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards their Total Elimination. The Treaty was opened for signature on 20 September, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic is among the countries to have signed this important Treaty. We hope that its early entry into force can contribute to the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

My delegation welcomes the General Assembly meeting to commemorate the International Day for

the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, which promotes public awareness on the danger of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction so that future generations will not follow the path of acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, as it is the only relevant international instrument that is being enforced and nearly universal. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to pursue, in good faith, effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, which are aimed at the full implementation of article VI of the NPT, thereby achieving and sustaining a world that is free from nuclear weapons.

My delegation supports the implementation of the three well-articulated pillars of nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We firmly believe that this serves the best interests of the international community. The three pillars are meant to be implemented equally, but instead nuclear disarmament is lagging behind.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), to which the Lao People's Democratic Republic also attaches great importance, would certainly contribute to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. However, more than 20 years after its adoption, the CTBT remains ineffective. It is therefore the duty of the international community to ensure the entry into force of the Treaty. We must be optimistic, and therefore hope that those that have not yet done so will indeed sign and ratify the CTBT.

In order to support international efforts, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has become a State party to a number of international instruments on disarmament and is committed to fulfilling its international obligations under those treaties.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic attaches great importance to the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones since, in our view, they have significantly contributed to the strengthening of the global nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime, as well as the enhancement of regional and global peace and security. As such, we are a strong supporter of preserving the South-East Asia region as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of

mass destruction, as enshrined in the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and in the ASEAN Charter.

We recognize the important role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in nuclear non-proliferation and the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear technology, nuclear safety and nuclear safeguards. In that respect, we are pleased to inform members that the Lao People's Democratic Republic has completed its internal process and signed the IAEA Additional Protocol.

My delegation also wishes also to touch upon the issue of cluster munitions, as we have learned that their use creates indiscriminate and undesirable long-term effects on people and development. The serious problem of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in my country is a case in point, as it continues to have a negative impact on our people and our national development. Clearing unexploded ordnance is a painstaking process and, given their vastness, we do not know how many years it will take to clear UXO-contaminated areas. Huge resources are needed to support that work. Over the past years, our efforts to clear UXO, supported and assisted by the international community, have yielded limited results. To address that lingering problem, last year the Lao Government launched its SDG 18: Lives Safe from UXO campaign. We call on the international community to pay close attention to the issue by supporting and assisting us in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 18, among others, to help rid my country of UXO, as well as by acceding to the Convention on Cluster Munitions so that this horrible experience is not repeated. We welcome the outcomes of the seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, held in September in Geneva, and look forward to the next Meeting of States Parties, to be held in Geneva in September 2018.

In conclusion, the strong political will and collective efforts of all States are critical to making progress on the very important issue of disarmament and non-proliferation. In addition, we stress that a multilateral approach is also critical to realizing the ultimate goal of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. That requires greater efforts from every State to work together to achieve our common goals to bring about a world that is free from fear and the threats posed by all kinds of weapons. My delegation will continue to contribute constructively to the work of the First Committee.

Mrs. Dallafior (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to chair the First Committee. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

An international order based on public international law is the best guarantor of global security. Universal compliance with rules and international agreements is therefore crucial. International security cannot but suffer when those standards are called into question. All Member States are duty-bound to work together respectfully to bolster international stability and security, including within the General Assembly.

The developments on the Korean peninsula are a major source of concern. Switzerland condemns in the strongest terms the nuclear and ballistic missile tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Those actions are real threats to both the nuclear non-proliferation regime and international security. The international community must take collective action to address the challenges posed by the actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In that connection, we welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 2375 (2017) on 11 September. In addition, the implementation of an ongoing diplomatic process is essential for several reasons. First of all, it can help manage the current crisis and mitigate associated risks. Secondly, it can help find a lasting, peaceful solution.

The risks associated with nuclear weapons are not limited to the North Korean issue. Developments in the security situation among certain States and alliances with nuclear weapons is also a cause for concern. Moreover, we are worried about the tensions surrounding important regimes such as the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty. The quantitative and qualitative increase of nuclear arsenals and the lack of progress in many key areas of nuclear disarmament, such as with regard to nuclear doctrine, are also worrisome indicators.

In that context, we stress the need to renew our efforts towards nuclear disarmament. Specifically, no action should call into question the commitment under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) of totally eliminating nuclear arsenals. Moreover, special efforts must be made by the nuclear-weapon States to advance decisively in the implementation of commitments undertaken at consecutive Review

Conferences of the Parties to the NPT, beginning with the 2010 Review Conference.

Switzerland actively participated in the negotiation process for a nuclear-weapon ban treaty. Although we feel that broader participation in the negotiations would have contributed to a more successful instrument, we voted in favour of the adoption of the final version of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We did so in the hope that the new Treaty will contribute to efforts to bring about a world free of nuclear weapons through clear prohibition standards. Nevertheless, Switzerland has some reservations on several of the Treaty's provisions, as the interpretation and implementation of some of them could negatively affect existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation processes and norms. The verifiability of certain key provisions also raises questions. Given those concerns, Switzerland will carry out a thorough assessment of the Treaty and its possible implications.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is celebrating its twentieth anniversary this year. It is an essential pillar of the global security architecture, and we welcome its achievements — primarily the fact that 96 per cent of declared chemical-weapon stockpiles have been destroyed. In that connection, we are gratified to hear the announcement by the Russian Federation regarding the final destruction of its declared stockpiles.

Nevertheless, we should not ignore the challenges that the Convention faces, beginning with the repeated use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict. Switzerland condemns in the strongest terms any use of chemical weapons in the conflict, including the attack in April in Khan Shaykhun. The ban of such weapons applies to all parties to the conflict in all circumstances. Moreover, Switzerland reiterates its full support and confidence in the Fact-finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. Those efforts are crucial if we are to fully shed light on the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and identify who is responsible for those acts. In that connection, Switzerland once again calls on the Security Council to refer the case to the International Criminal Court.

Developments in the field of conventional weapons also require our full attention. Ongoing conflicts around the world this year have served to underline once again the humanitarian consequences of those weapons and

the challenges they pose to international humanitarian law. The indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices is ever-increasing, as is the number of victims it claims. Moreover, the use by State or non-State actors of certain conventional weapons and explosive ordnance in areas of concentrated civilian populations or civilian properties is a cause for concern for the international community. Anchoring this issue on the agenda of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) will enable us to address it in an inclusive framework and to further discuss the issue with a view to the full implementation of international humanitarian law.

Technological developments also pose various challenges in the area of conventional weapons. That is true of autonomous weapons systems. We regret that the Group of Governmental Experts established under the CCW was unable to meet for the first time this year due to payment arrears. We hope that the session slated for November will allow us to make progress on that issue. Nevertheless, the challenge posed by the speed and scope of technological developments are not limited to autonomous weapons systems. Advances in artificial intelligence, 3D printing or even in the field of nanotechnology, *inter alia*, also raise important issues for the disarmament community.

All of those questions require responses. We must therefore be able to rely on functional disarmament processes. Financial difficulties affecting several disarmament conventions have significant negative effects and repercussions, including the cancellation of important conferences. We appeal to the sense of responsibility of Member States. Measures must be taken to prevent arrears on all such conventions and improve their budgetary processes.

Mr. Bessedik (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, on your election to lead the First Committee. We assure you and the Bureau of our full support.

(*spoke in English*)

As a State party to the main treaties related to weapons of mass destruction, Algeria emphasizes that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remain its highest priorities. We express our determination to work towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. I take this opportunity to reaffirm Algeria's long-standing principled position on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and

non-proliferation regime, and underscore the need to ensure its full implementation and compliance with each of its three pillars in a balanced manner.

In that regard, while calling upon all non-signatory parties to the Treaty to join it without delay or conditions, we urge the nuclear-weapon States, which have the primary responsibility to achieve nuclear disarmament, to fulfil the Treaty's obligations. We also call upon the nuclear-weapon States to demonstrate the political will to enable the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT to produce concrete recommendations towards achieving nuclear disarmament, which is the ultimate objective of the NPT. For its part, Algeria will spare no effort to ensure the success of the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

Algeria, which continues to suffer the human and environmental consequences of the nuclear tests carried out on its territory in the early 1960s, believes that nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons are the only absolute guarantees against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In that firm belief, Algeria has adhered to the humanitarian pledge and wishes to contribute to the international community's awareness of the dangers of such weapons.

Based on that conviction, Algeria, which was among the first countries to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, on 20 September, considers that landmark Treaty to be a necessary step in delegitimizing nuclear weapons and establishing paths towards their total elimination, and calls upon all Member States to join it.

After more than 20 years since the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we regret that this vital multilateral instrument for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has still not entered into force. In that respect, Algeria calls upon the remaining States, in particular those listed in annex 2, whose ratification is required for the Treaty's entry into force, to ratify it without further delay.

My delegation strongly supports any initiative that seeks to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world, as they are not only confidence-building measures but also concrete steps towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation norms. They also help to consolidate international efforts for peace and security. In that regard, Algeria believes that the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone

Treaty represents an important contribution to the strengthening of international peace and security. In particular, we call on the nuclear-weapon States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the relevant annexes of the Treaty. Algeria deeply regrets that the Middle East region still does not have that status, and expresses its strong disappointment over the adjournment of the conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

With regard to the other instruments related to weapons of mass destruction, Algeria believes that the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention are important components of the international legal architecture. We call for their balanced, effective and non-discriminatory implementation, as well as for enhancing international cooperation to allow the transfer of chemical and biological technologies, particularly to developing countries.

Concerning conventional weapons, my delegation would like to stress that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to threaten peace and stability in many countries and regions, particularly in North Africa and the Sahel. This illicit trade supplies terrorist groups and fuels organized crime, and is therefore an ongoing concern for my country. On the basis of its national experience, Algeria reaffirms that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons are more relevant than ever. We continue to emphasize the importance of their full, balanced, and effective implementation.

Building on the successful conclusion of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, our delegation looks forward to further actions to eliminate the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in advance of the holding of the third Review Conference, in 2018.

Moreover, since its accession to the Convention on Anti-Personnel Mines, Algeria has spared no effort in fulfilling its obligations and has worked tirelessly to achieve the noble objectives set 20 years ago by the States parties to the Convention. In that respect, we take this opportunity to announce that Algeria's

efforts were crowned by the finalization this year of the destruction of its remaining stockpiles of anti-personnel mines and the completion of humanitarian demining operations — removing more than 8.8 million mines.

With regard to the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, Algeria believes that lack of political will is clearly the reason for the continuing deadlock of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), which is another source of frustration and disappointment. In that connection, Algeria reaffirms the importance of the CD as the sole multilateral negotiating body for disarmament, and calls upon the CD to agree on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work.

Furthermore, my country reaffirms the importance and relevance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized and a universal deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, as well as its role in considering various problems in the field of disarmament. We join other Member States in welcoming this year's consensual adoption of the recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We call upon all Member States to demonstrate the necessary political will and flexibility in order to also enable this body to reach consensus next year on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Finally, we view the First Committee as an essential component of the United Nations disarmament machinery, and we remain committed to working actively and constructively during this session. In that context, in the course of our meetings, Algeria will submit its annual draft resolution on strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, for which we seek the support of all delegations.

Mr. Cortorreal (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a genuine honour for the delegation of the Dominican Republic to echo the sentiments of previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to chair the First Committee. We also congratulate the Bureau and pledge our full cooperation in carrying out its tasks.

Illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons is a serious threat to our States, as it could serve to provide a breeding ground for organized crime. That, in turn, threatens the security and economies of many countries, since crime endangers the lives of our citizens

and negatively affects peace and social coexistence, tourism and investment — both foreign and domestic. The Dominican Republic is working diligently to enforce arms control and promoting measures that enable the seizure of illegal weapons and the establishment of strict policies governing the granting of licenses to carry weapons. We have also tightened controls to prevent arms trafficking across our borders. We believe that the Arms Trade Treaty provides unique opportunity to make relevant legislation more rigorous and universal. In that connection, we welcome the fact that many countries have signed and/or ratified the Treaty.

We all seem to agree that nuclear weapons have no place in a world that we all wish to be peaceful. However, several decades after the disappearance of the antagonisms that gave rise to their existence, we are not only still discussing their uselessness and the pertinence of their destruction, but also the fear that other countries will equip themselves with such weapons, or the threat posed by such weapons falling into the hands of terrorist groups.

A detonation of nuclear weapons would not be limited by national borders. It would affect various States and several generations of people. All of those points undoubtedly contributed to the historic adoption in July of urgent measures to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. The Dominican Republic, a peace-loving country by nature and tradition, was pleased to vote in favour of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and we hope to sign this important international instrument soon.

The candidature of the Dominican Republic for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2019-20, in elections slated for June 2018, was recently endorsed by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. We intend to exchange views with Member States on our concerns about the threat posed by climate change to international peace and security, particularly to small island developing States. We believe that threats to peace and security do not come only from armed conflict but can also arise from the very nature and consequences of human activities and their effects on the environment. Caribbean countries, for example, can experience up to five hurricanes in one season. The month of September was devastating for the Caribbean region, where, in addition to Hurricane Maria, we were ravaged by Hurricane Irma, which left death and heavy infrastructure damage in

its wake. It was obviously a clear signal sent by nature itself, to which we must learn to listen in order to better understand the new types of challenges to international peace and security that we face today.

Rising sea levels, dying coral reefs and the increasing frequency of natural disasters contribute to worsening living conditions and lead to the displacement and migration of communities. They tend to heighten tension over resources and affect national and regional stability. In those processes, which have a greater impact on small island developing States, we may be seeing an omen of what the future of the world will bring. Recognizing the security problems that affect small island developing States in a timely manner and working together to address them offers an outstanding opportunity to take preventive measures.

Finally, the Dominican Republic understands that this opportunity should not be wasted, and we hope that the First Committee can serve as a platform for issues relating to international peace and security — from the perspective of small island developing States — to play a leading role at the heart of our discussions.

Mr. Rentola (Finland): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the Chair of the First Committee. Let me assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

In addition to the statements delivered by the observer of the European Union and the representative of Norway on behalf of the Nordic countries (see A/C.1/72/PV.2), let me deliver some additional remarks in my national capacity.

The actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea constitute an acute threat to regional and international peace and security. Finland condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches, which are grave violations of its international obligations and multiple Security Council resolutions. Once again, we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its illegal nuclear and missile programmes and to comply with its international obligations. We commend the Security Council for its leadership and unanimous approach in efforts to resolve the threatening situation caused by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We urge all nations to fully implement all Council decisions, including resolution 2375 (2017).

The recent actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea highlight the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its verification and monitoring mechanisms. We call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and other States to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay.

We welcome the ongoing implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and call on all parties to the JCPOA to implement it in full.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime. It is the foundation for nuclear disarmament, in accordance with the Treaty's own article VI. Finland emphasizes all three pillars of the NPT. Our approach to nuclear disarmament is pragmatic, and we recognize that it is a gradual process.

A world free of nuclear weapons must be our objective. In order to achieve that, we have to proceed in a unified and inclusive way. All nuclear-weapon States have to be on board. We reiterate our call on all the nuclear-weapon States and other States possessing such weapons to promptly take concrete actions and confidence-building measures to promote nuclear disarmament.

We are especially concerned about the thousands of tactical nuclear weapons stationed in Europe, in our close vicinity. Those weapons are not covered today by any binding, verifiable agreement — a gap that has to be filled. There should also be a clear division between these weapons and conventional weapons in military doctrines and in exercises. And finally, we need practical confidence-building measures in this field as well.

The possibility of non-State actors and terrorist groups getting hold of biological, chemical, nuclear or radiological weapons constitutes a real threat to society. As a consequence, international cooperation in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) is increasingly relevant.

In order to prevent terrorism, it is also important to build prevention capacity at the global level. Finnish experts have been training chemists from over 130 developing countries in chemical-weapon verification. In addition, we are building biosecurity and health security capacity, as well as enhancing nuclear security and safety worldwide.

The United Nations-Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Joint Investigative Mechanism has determined that the Syrian Arab Republic and Da'esh have used chemical weapons in Syria. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, be it a State or a non-State actor, anywhere, anytime and under any circumstances is clearly contrary to international law, and those responsible must be held accountable. As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Syrian Arab Republic has explicitly obligated itself not to possess, develop or use chemical weapons. We urge the Government of Syria to extend full cooperation to the OPCW to resolve all outstanding issues and finally destroy its chemical-weapons programme completely and irreversibly.

We want to achieve the full universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We once again call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Israel and South Sudan to join the Convention without delay, thereby contributing to the goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

Conventional arms and explosives kill more than half a million people every year. We need to pay more attention to small arms and other conventional weapons in order to reduce the tragic consequences of their use. In recent years, one of the bright spots has been the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). As the previous President of the ATT, Finland has emphasized the universalization and strengthened implementation of the Treaty. We are grateful for the support that we received from Governments and civil society in our work.

I would like to conclude by reminding members how new technology is changing the global political environment. Science and technology, the Internet, social media, space, cybertechnology and artificial intelligence have immense positive impact on life everywhere. At the same time, we need to look seriously into how they affect international security and arms control. The development of lethal autonomous weapons opens up a totally new perspective on warfare and raises difficult questions about ethics, regulation and international rules.

We also need to be sufficiently prepared for new kinds of hybrid threats. Legislation, regulation and rules of the game are urgently needed. We have to engage not only Governments and the political leadership, but also the private sector and academia. It is crucial to create a safe and secure environment where we can profit from

advances in technology without putting ourselves or our societies at risk.

A full version of this statement will be made available in writing.

Mr. Mistrik (Slovakia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming your chairmanship. Slovakia wishes you every success in your endeavours in steering this body. Let me assure you of my delegation's full support.

Slovakia associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/72/PV.2). Nevertheless, I would like to stress the following points from our national perspective. The full text will be posted on the web.

This year's session of the First Committee is taking place in very challenging times, as we are witnessing the substantive deterioration of the global security environment. The nuclear and missile testing of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; the use of chemical weapons, which is something we were unable to conceive of in the twenty-first century; inadequate or ineffective implementation of respective international instruments and the inability to negotiate new ones — all this calls for redoubling our efforts to revitalize the whole disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Nuclear disarmament and the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy were always central to those endeavours. They have been the three pillars of the non-proliferation regime for half of a century. We need to strengthen its implementation and make progress on its further development. All State parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) must implement their obligations and commitments assumed under the Treaty or undertaken during its Review Conferences. We also need to promote the universalization of the NPT. The positive atmosphere during the first session of the Preparatory Committee makes us hopeful that we will be able to stay the course throughout the review cycle ending in 2020 via the successful conclusion of the NPT Review Conference.

Slovakia, like many others, is committed to the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. However, we believe that the way to achieve it is through effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament that takes into account the prevailing security environment.

Slovakia, together with its allies and partners, supports the pragmatic and progressive incremental approach. We do not believe that the very existence of a legally binding international instrument banning nuclear weapons will bring us to global zero. Furthermore, in our view, the substantive and constructive engagement of States possessing nuclear weapons is essential.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a crucial step for advancing disarmament and non-proliferation. Slovakia calls on all States, especially the remaining annex 2 countries that have not signed or ratified the CTBT, to do so without delay. Slovakia has been actively contributing to building the capacities of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission. Last year, Slovakia hosted an introductory on-site inspection course at a training centre in Lešť. We believe that the agreement between the Government of Slovakia and the Preparatory Commission on mutual cooperation related to on-site inspections will be instrumental in deepening our engagement.

As another concrete step in advancing multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation, Slovakia supports the early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We believe that the work of the High-level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group could contribute to making progress in that regard.

Slovakia believes that the Conference on Disarmament (CD), as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, is an indispensable tool of the disarmament machinery, despite it remaining in deadlock for the past two decades. During its presidency of the Conference in June, Slovakia led the consultations aiming to reach consensus on a programme of work. Although we were unable to reach that goal, the CD member States, which bear the primary responsibility, should not abandon their attempts to overcome the existing status quo.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action demonstrates the possibility of reaching peaceful and diplomatic solutions to the proliferation challenges. Slovakia welcomes progress made so far in its implementation, and underlines the need to continue ensuring its full and effective implementation throughout the entire lifetime of the deal.

Slovakia considers the Biological Weapons Convention to be an important pillar of the disarmament

and non-proliferation architecture. We are disappointed by the outcome of the latest Review Conference. Nevertheless, we need to focus on the upcoming Meeting of State Parties. Slovakia, as its nominated Vice-Chair, welcomes the nomination of Ambassador Gill from India as Chair, and pledges its strong support in the fulfilment of his tasks. We hope the States parties will be able to find consensus on the intersessional work programme.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Slovakia welcomes the significant progress in its implementation and universalization. From the outset, Slovakia has been a strong and active supporter of the Convention, as well as of the mandate and activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Slovakia also continues to fulfil its commitments to the OPCW through tangible contributions. So far, we have organized several training courses for inspectors of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and OPCW member States in our national explosive ordnance disposal centre and nuclear, biological and chemical base in Zemianske Kostol'any, Slovakia. We plan to continue those activities in the future.

Slovakia supports the international community's efforts to prevent terrorists and other non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), Slovakia has been supporting ongoing efforts to enhance its functioning and full implementation. Last year, we co-sponsored and welcomed the unanimous adoption of the Council resolution 2325 (2016) as a further solid contribution to global non-proliferation efforts.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Ottawa Convention. Slovakia firmly believes that the international community should continue to work towards the full implementation of the goals of the Convention and the Maputo Action Plan, for the sake of the States and the people affected by anti-personnel landmines. Having met its obligations under the Convention, Slovakia stands ready to continue its focus on contributions to areas where we have means and experience. That includes contributing to mine-clearance, stockpile destruction and the destruction of other explosive devices, where emphasis is given to environmentally friendly methods of disposal.

Slovakia also remains fully committed to meeting all its obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We are determined to make every effort to destroy our stockpiles of cluster munitions by the stipulated deadline of 1 January 2024, or even earlier.

Slovakia welcomes the outcome of the recent third Meeting of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, which acknowledged the positive direction of the Treaty in establishing an essential norm of international law for the regulation of the global arms trade. Along with a thorough national implementation, Slovakia continues to adopt additional measures to increase the transparency of its national arms transfers.

Ms. Grignon (Kenya): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee. Let me also congratulate and welcome the other members of the Bureau on their election. I assure you of the support and cooperation of my delegation, and look forward to fruitful deliberations under your leadership. I also congratulate Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu on assuming her new role as the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and for her comprehensive briefing during the opening meeting (see A/C.1/72/PV.2).

Kenya aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/72/PV.2).

Our delegation reaffirms Kenya's long-standing commitment to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and a world free of nuclear weapons. Allow me to reiterate Kenya's vision for a nuclear-free world.

My delegation welcomes the adoption and opening for signature of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July. This is the first legally binding international instrument that comprehensively prohibits nuclear weapons, with the goal of ensuring their total elimination. The overwhelming majority of United Nations States Members support the Treaty, even if nuclear-weapon States were absent during its negotiation and adoption. The Treaty is a critical milestone in achieving the goals and purposes of the United Nations. That is why its full implementation and that of other international conventions and treaties banning nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction must remain a priority for Member States.

We are concerned by the continued increase in military expenditures on acquiring nuclear weapons or modernizing current stocks and their delivery mechanisms. The international security situation in the Korean peninsula over nuclear and ballistic missile tests has heightened fears and anxieties of a nuclear catastrophe. We call on all parties to embrace peaceful political dialogue and to avoid war-like rhetoric, as there would be no winners in any nuclear confrontation. It would be a loss to all humankind. My delegation greatly values the immense contribution and important work of the Conference on Disarmament and of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We welcome the historic adoption of the recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons earlier this year. We see that development as an indication that, with sufficient political will, progress in disarmament can be achieved.

Kenya strongly believes that disarmament and development are interconnected. Disarmament must be accompanied by efforts to build or rebuild economic, social and governance structures that foster political participation and social integration and equality. Furthermore, resources saved on disarmament should be transferred effectively to the programmes and efforts that require them most, such as poverty alleviation, health and education and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

My delegation emphasizes that the illicit transfer and trade in small arms and light weapons is a serious threat to international peace and security. Kenya has taken important measures to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. They include strengthening the policy and legislative frameworks to address loopholes in the law and to ensure proper national stockpile management of small arms and light weapons.

The effects of the widespread availability of small arms and their misuse have long contributed to many unnecessary conflicts, especially in Africa. Those conflicts have resulted in the displacement of millions of people from their homes as refugees or internally displaced persons. Terrorism, wildlife poaching, piracy, cattle rustling and other serious criminal activities that threaten international peace and security are also consequences of the proliferation of small arms and their easy availability. The United Nations must therefore do more collectively to address the proliferation of small

arms and light weapons by ensuring that best practices, information-sharing and best tools are applied in order to conclusively address the problem.

Kenya welcomes the deliberations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. We appreciate the efforts of the Group to reach consensus on a common understanding of existing and potential threats posed by the use and misuse of information, communication and technology. We must stop terrorists and criminals from appropriating cyberspace and using it to plan terror attacks, recruit and radicalize our youth, launder money and commit other international crimes.

It is our hope and expectation that even as the Group deliberates on possible measures to address the threats, the use of information and communication technologies for the common good by Member States will be encouraged and supported. Where necessary, research and data can be appropriated for guiding policies, laws, training and other capacity-strengthening initiatives at national levels for Member States.

In conclusion, my delegation looks forward to working with you, Mr. Chair, during this session of the First Committee to achieve a successful outcome. We will comment more appropriately and comprehensively on other issues as they arise during the thematic debates. We reiterate our support and cooperation with you and other members of the Bureau.

The Chair: Before giving the floor to speakers in exercise of the right of reply, may I remind delegations that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for a second intervention.

Mr. In Il Ri (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like to speak in exercise of the right of reply in response to the groundless condemnations made by representatives of some countries against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear deterrence. Those remarks are unacceptable. In an attempt to address their lack of understanding and misinformation and knowledge about our nuclear deterrence, I would like to say a few words. Our nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles are a powerful self-defence nuclear deterrence to safeguard our country's sovereignty, right of existence and supreme interests.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Based on its firm position, the Syrian Arab Republic rejects any use of chemical weapons or any other kind of weapon of mass destruction. Their use is a crime against humanity and is unacceptable, immoral and unjustifiable under any circumstance. My country therefore has acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and has met its commitments under the provisions of the Convention. The Syrian Government made an unprecedented achievement in the history of the Organization by ending the Syrian chemical programme in record time through an irreversible shutdown of the programme. That was expressed by Ms. Sigrid Kaag, head of the joint United Nations-Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons mission to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons, in her report to the Security Council in June 2014.

It is regrettable that a delegation of a country like Belgium would level accusations against another country. Belgium's allegations that it supports non-proliferation and that it is not satisfied with the current pace of nuclear disarmament, as indicated in its statement today, are false, because Belgium is spreading nuclear weapons on its territories in clear violation of its commitments pursuant to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Turning to conventional weapons, I call upon my colleagues to read international reports and reports issued by Security Council committees on counter-terrorism and other relevant committees, which affirm the presence of Belgium-made weapons in most of the world's hotspots. There are many examples of Belgium's violations of its international commitments.

I would like to remind my Belgian colleague that Belgium was one of the very first European countries to export terrorist technology to my country. Terrorism, for his knowledge, is also a weapon of mass destruction and one of the worst kinds of aggression.

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

Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee): I would like to inform delegations that, as of today, the First Committee secretariat has received only four draft resolutions for processing — that is translation and issuance. In that context, I would like to remind them that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions and decisions on all agenda items was established as Thursday, 12 October, at noon. Delegations therefore they have less than one week for the submission of drafts.

I would like to remind the main sponsors that the late uploading of draft resolutions and decisions on the e-sponsorship portal will result in a reduced number of main sponsors, usually published on the first page of the draft text. As delegations should know, on the day of submission of the draft text for translation and issuance — Friday, 13 October — the list of main sponsors on the e-sponsorship portal will be closed, and the delegations that will join their drafts after that day will be placed on the list of additional sponsors. Therefore, I would like to encourage delegations to upload their drafts on the e-sponsorship portal as soon as possible in order to start generating lists of sponsors as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.