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First Committee

2nd meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Jinga. (Romania)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m. (spoke in English)

Introductory statements

The Chair (*spoke in French*): Given that French and English are the two working languages of the United Nations, today I will make an effort to use them both. I therefore hope that the switch does not cause too much difficulty for the interpreters.

I would like to warmly welcome all delegations to this meeting, particularly those joining us for the first time from other United Nations duty stations. I would also like to welcome the presence of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu. Later this morning, we will also be joined by Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the General Assembly.

At the outset, let me extend my warmest congratulations to Ambassador Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom of Iraq for the skilful and effective manner in which he conducted the proceedings of the First Committee at its seventy-second session. I should also like to pay tribute to the other members of the previous session's Bureau for all their hard work in ensuring the success of the session.

In accordance with its programme of work and timetable, the First Committee will begin its general debate today on all disarmament and international security agenda items allocated to it — items 93 to 108. Before we proceed, allow me to make a brief statement in my capacity as Chair of the First Committee at this session.

In today's world, the increasing tension in international relations is worrisome. As the most important and universal multilateral forum, the United Nations plays a role in fostering dialogue and cooperation that is therefore even more crucial. The First Committee is the United Nations body where all Member States gather to comprehensively review the progress made and setbacks encountered in all areas of disarmament and non-proliferation over the previous year and to plan the action needed for the future.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin and should be pursued in parallel, in a mutually enhancing manner. In that respect, I welcome the Secretary-General's initiative in launching his disarmament agenda, which aims to place disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation at the centre of promoting global peace and security. The 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is a crucial opportunity for States parties to narrow their differences and find common ground to strengthen the regime, which is vital to international security.

At the same time, we have witnessed how, despite the international taboo against chemical weapons, toxic chemicals have been repeatedly used as a means of warfare, including against civilians, occurred a number of times. Perpetrators must be held accountable in order to prevent such blatant violations of international law from happening again.

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There are also some encouraging developments. The Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space showed that discussions can also take place in a constructive atmosphere. I hope that such positive momentum can be maintained.

I welcome the consensus outcome document reached at the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in 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 (A/CONF.192/2018, RC/3, annex), but further action is needed. Together with the Arms Trade Treaty and other conventional arms instruments and measures, human security, sustainable development and civilian protection should be addressed in an integrated approach to achieve sustainable security and the Sustainable Development Goals.

While rapid advancements in science and technology has brought about huge benefits for humankind, at the same time they might also have negative security impacts and unintended consequences. I hope that the United Nations can play a catalysing role in engaging all stakeholders, Governments, the private sector and civil society to address those security concerns.

The Disarmament and International Security Committee is tasked with seeking solutions to threats that affect international peace and facilitating collaboration on disarmament. That particularly large responsibility also comes with significant expectations, meaning that the work of the Committee is not easy.

My country has a long tradition as an honest broker and promoter of peace through effective diplomacy. As a State party to all major multilateral arms limitation and disarmament agreements, Romania has proven its dedication to facilitating the finding of solutions to issues that challenge international peace and security.

As Chair of the First Committee, I therefore intend to concentrate on three essential aspects: first, being an honest broker in debates; secondly, seeking consensus whenever possible; and, thirdly, focusing on improving the working atmosphere of confidence and collaboration among representatives. However, ultimately, all of those goals are in the hands of Committee members, the representatives of Member States.

The Disarmament and International Security Committee has a duty to operate to the highest possible

standards. Our meetings take place at the United Nations, and I can only hope that the United Nations spirit, which is characterized by mutual respect, mutual understanding and consensus, will prevail during these meetings.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I now invite the President of the General Assembly, Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, to address the Committee.

Ms. Espinosa Garcés (President of the General Assembly): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, and the members of the Bureau on their election. I count on your leadership on the key issues before the First Committee and really look forward to working with you.

Disarmament and international security lie at the heart of our determination to achieve sustainable development and save current and future generations from the horrors of war. While the world has seen a reduction in inter-State conflicts, the many conflicts that continue to affect different parts of the world show that we have much to do to achieve the ideals of peace within and among nations.

In addition, the challenges to international peace and security have evolved, which has implications for the Committee. Nuclear proliferation remains a critical issue. Chemical and biological weapons pose a constant threat, including from non-State actors. Cybersecurity threats have emerged in recent years, including as a means for covert attacks. Moreover, an arms race in outer space looms as a realistic possibility, perhaps for the first time.

The challenges that I have outlined are central to the theme of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, “Making the United Nations relevant to all people: Global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies”. That means that the work of Committee members in the fields of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control to secure a more peaceful and secure world is vital and demands the highest sense of responsibility. Indeed, the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in 1978, declared that

“All the peoples of the world have a vital interest in the success of disarmament negotiations. Consequently, all States have the duty to contribute

to efforts in the field of disarmament.” (A/S-10/2, para. 28).

That statement applies equally to all the threats dealt with by the Committee. Allow me to reflect on three points that are pertinent to our efforts towards disarmament and international security.

First, we must build on the strong commitments that world leaders made at the General Assembly two weeks ago. During the Committee’s work it should integrate the commitments to peace and prosperity made by Member States during the recent Nelson Mandela Peace Summit (see A/73/PV.4 *et seq.*). As emphasized by so many world leaders during the general debate, the Organization must promote greater investments in prevention in order to avoid the higher cost of addressing conflicts. I am deeply encouraged by the recent progress in the Horn of Africa, as well as the diplomatic rapprochement on the Korean peninsula.

The second point relates to the need to encourage countries to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted in 2017. While the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was a historic step for multilateralism and international law, it is important that Member States ratify the Treaty and bring it into force, sooner rather than later. I am pleased that, during the general debate, seven States deposited their instruments of ratification, bringing the number of countries that have ratified the Treaty so far to 19, with 69 signatories. We need 31 Member States to ratify the Treaty for it to come into force. We must also remain committed to our obligations under all international instruments regulating the use and proliferations of arms.

Thirdly, we must strengthen inclusion as a means to promote international peace and security. The evidence is clear — sustaining peace and preventing conflict requires a multidimensional approach. I believe that, when we give due attention to investing in women and young people and promoting equal and inclusive societies, we can make headway in sustaining peace. That is why youth, peace and security, as well as women’s empowerment, are two of my seven priorities this year.

Before concluding, allow me to say that I am deeply aware of the challenges and tensions that surround and influence discussions on disarmament. However, I encourage Member States to continue to negotiate meaningful outcomes for the common good

of our interdependent world. As representatives of our Governments, we have a responsibility to pursue multilateral dialogue and to avoid, at all costs, violence and conflict.

I therefore wish to thank Member States for their participation and fruitful deliberations during the high-level plenary meeting on the commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. At a time of general scepticism towards multilateral institutions and arrangements, with a need to prevent the unraveling of those systems that have served us well since the founding of our United Nations, we all need to work together to show that the General Assembly can deliver new agreements and understanding towards peace. Therefore, during the next months of work, we shall be looking to the Committee to create the necessary synergies to positively influence multilateral processes towards the main objective of disarmament.

I encourage all Member States to envision disarmament and arms-control efforts as a means to a greater end. Our collective end goal must be peace and security for all the peoples of the world, so that all communities and people can thrive and enjoy individual well-being. The Secretary-General’s actions proposed in his Agenda for Disarmament must be a great source of inspiration to us to use disarmament to save humankind, save lives and secure a common future. Let us make the work of this body relevant to all people by demonstrating that, when faced with the most difficult of challenges, we can truly deliver.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I thank the President of the General Assembly for her statement and words of encouragement. I understand that the President has to leave at this time due to another engagement. We thank her again for being here, and we welcome the prospects of further cooperation during this session.

I now have the pleasure of inviting the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, to make a statement.

Mrs. Nakamitsu (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): I am grateful for this opportunity to address the First Committee at its seventy-third session.

At the outset, I congratulate Ambassador Ion Jinga on his assumption of the Chair and assure him of the

fullest support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. I would also like to thank His Excellency Ambassador Bahr Aluloom, Permanent Representative of Iraq, for his able chairmanship during the seventy-second session of the First Committee.

Since the Committee last convened (see A/C.1/72/PV.29), issues relating to disarmament and international security have remained at the forefront of public consciousness. That has been driven foremost by concerns over weapons of mass destruction. Those concerns, and the dangers they reflect, have been greatly exacerbated by international tensions — which are at their worst state since the end of the Cold War — the lack of accountability for the use of chemical weapons, malicious acts using digital technologies and major question marks that hang over landmark agreements for nuclear reductions and limitations.

Disputes over nuclear weapons, including both their proliferation and continued existence, have been among the top international security concerns that have commanded the attention of world leaders. During the high-level debate of the General Assembly, no fewer than 80 States made reference to nuclear weapons. The Security Council held meetings on related topics involving both Heads of State and Ministers.

Not all of that attention has been negative. The majority of Member States continue to support the preservation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Bold and patient diplomacy has moved the situation on the Korean peninsula back from the brink of crisis. The historic summit between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States was an important step towards comprehensive and verifiable denuclearization, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, and sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula. The three inter-Korean summits have led to the implementation of confidence-building measures that are easing tensions, reducing the risk of armed conflict and promoting reconciliation. The Secretary-General has welcomed those developments and called for the international community to support those ongoing endeavours.

While we are relieved to see that regional situation step back from a state of crisis, at the global level nuclear risks will remain unacceptably high as long as nuclear weapons continue to exist. As an illustration of that risk, we are witnessing with alarm leading military Powers in tension and disputes with each other

on several issues, including over the use of weapons of mass destruction.

Above all, I believe that underscores the need to redouble our efforts to seek a common path to reduce nuclear risks, build confidence and realize concrete progress leading towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The next major milestone on the calendar is the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I hope that all States can make use of that session and all other available forums to narrow their differences so that a successful outcome can be achieved in 2020.

It is encouraging that the Russian Federation and the United States are pursuing discussions on the possible extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. Such a step can provide important breathing space for more substantial strategic dialogue. However, it should not be a stopping point or reduce the urgency of pursuing concrete measures to reduce nuclear risks and accomplish meaningful progress towards the fulfilment of outstanding disarmament commitments.

As the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has demonstrated, strong international support exists for a permanent end to the threat posed by nuclear arms. With respect to other weapons of destruction, the use of any toxic chemical, including chlorine, as a weapon, is totally unacceptable by any party and under any circumstances. Anyone who uses chemical weapons must be identified and held to account.

The Security Council holds the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The adoption of the June decision by the special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, which addressed the threat from chemical-weapons use, has not lessened the need for the Council to find a common approach to tackle that issue. The international community must work together to prevent the erosion of the norm against chemical weapons.

In the area of conventional arms, it is regrettable that, as some countries increasingly seek security in weapons, the global arms trade continues to grow at near historic levels. Enormous arsenals are being accumulated, including in the most fragile and conflict-prone regions of the globe. As armed conflict

moves from open fields to urban centres, it is civilians who are the victims of this massive accumulation of weapons, especially when explosive weapons are used in populated areas. Military forces and armed groups are acquiring ever more powerful weapons that cause untold casualties, destroy critical infrastructure and drive record numbers of people from their homes.

I welcome the consensus outcome achieved at the third Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (A/CONF.192/2018, RC/3, annex). At the same time, I am cognizant of the fact that firearms remain a leading cause of violent harm and an accelerant of many other forms of violence.

The Secretary-General specifically addressed the impacts of new technologies on warfare in his remarks at the high-level debate of the General Assembly (see A/73/PV.6). He characterized those impacts as a direct threat to our common responsibility to guarantee peace and security. He also observed that malicious acts in cyberspace are polarizing communities and diminishing trust among States. He placed particular emphasis on the weaponization of artificial intelligence as a growing concern. He went on to say:

“The prospect of weapons that can select and attack a target on their own raises multiple alarms and could trigger new arms races. The diminished oversight of weapons has implications for our efforts to contain threats, prevent escalation and adhere to international humanitarian law and human rights law. Let us call it as it is. The prospect of machines with the discretion and power to take human life is morally repugnant.” (A/73/PV.6, p. 4)

He also encouraged Member States to use the United Nations as a platform to draw global attention to those crucial matters and to nurture a digital future that is safe and beneficial for all.

Concerns over the impact of arms are never raised in a vacuum. The current debate on the relationship between stockpiles and security is taking place in a deteriorated international environment of spiralling mistrust and rivalries. For instance, some continue to describe the poor state of the international security environment as a rationale for their continued reliance on nuclear weapons and other national military capabilities. We should strive to avoid circular debate on what needs to be resolved first — the concerns many

share over the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the security conditions that have convinced some that they still need to rely heavily on them.

I do not think that anyone doubts that confidence and trust-building are essential instruments in the disarmament tool box. There should also not be any doubt that we can make simultaneous progress on the inseparable objectives of reducing arms and building a better international security environment.

In the light of that situation and the challenges we face, it is encouraging to see many members of the international community rallying around the objective of preserving the international rules-based system. Indeed, many of the fundamental axioms that underpin our national and human security rest on the solid foundations of multilateral customs, norms, agreements, arrangements and institutions. They have brought about real security benefits, which we all enjoy and often take for granted, extending from the taboo against the use of weapons of mass destruction to the prohibition against making civilians the object of attack.

However, as some of the trends I highlighted earlier illustrate, we need constantly to reinforce and build out that system to keep pace with new challenges and developments. We can expect to realize common security for all only if we have fair and effective institutions, starting with the full and equal participation of women in all disarmament processes as a priority.

The need to stronger support States to advance their efforts to reinforce the rules-based international system is the very reason that the Secretary-General decided to launch his agenda for disarmament this year. I am pleased to announce that last week we launched the initial implementation plan for the disarmament agenda on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. It details the planned activities of entities across the United Nations system. It will be a dynamic document. As work progresses, we will update it regularly and new steps and activities will be added.

We are grateful for the expressions of support that we have received and the commitments that some Governments have made to champion specific actions. Those champions have committed to financially support or politically support, in a leadership capacity, activities in connection with the agenda. Our intention is to publicly identify those States and regional organizations on the website for the implementation

plan, in appreciation of their support for and partnership in disarmament efforts. I look forward to having an opportunity later during this session to engage with the Committee in what I hope will be an interactive discussion on the implementation of the Secretary-General's initiative.

In his remarks at the general debate of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General said that, in the face of massive, existential threats to people and planet, but equally at a time of compelling opportunities for shared prosperity, there is no way forward but collective, common-sense action for the common good. Through the Secretary-General's disarmament initiative, entities in the United Nations system and beyond are committed to working with First Committee members to make full use of this session to find common solutions. I appeal to all Committee members to also heed the words of the Secretary-General, rise above conference room politics and keep their sights set on advancing the common good, in a spirit of compromise and cooperation.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I thank the High Representative for her statement.

Before opening the floor for statements in the general debate, I would like to remind delegations that I count on their cooperation to limit statements to eight minutes when speaking in a national capacity and 13 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations. To assist speakers in that regard, and with members' understanding, we will use a timing mechanism by which the red light on the speaker's microphone will begin to blink when the time limit has been reached. As necessary, I will kindly remind speakers to conclude their statements in our collective interest.

As mentioned during our organizational meeting last Thursday (see A/C.1/73/PV.1), I encourage delegations that have longer statements to deliver a summarized version and to provide their full statement to be posted on the PaperSmart web portal. I would also encourage speakers to speak at a reasonable speed to allow for adequate interpretation.

I would further remind delegations that the rolling list of speakers for the general debate will be closed tomorrow, Tuesday, 9 October, at 6 p.m. Therefore, all delegations intending to take the floor during the general debate that have not yet inscribed their names on the list are encouraged to do so before that deadline.

Delegations are further reminded that the Department of Public Information will issue press releases with daily coverage of our proceedings in English and French, which will be posted on the United Nations website a few hours after each meeting.

Agenda items 93 to 108

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Ms. Krisnamurthi (Indonesia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

I would like to congratulate Mr. Ion Jinga and the other members of the Bureau on their elections; I assure them of our full cooperation.

NAM reiterates its positions on the entire range of disarmament and international security issues as contained in the final document of the eighteenth mid-term ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Baku in April. In that context, I would like to highlight the Movement's views on some important issues.

The Movement reaffirms its principled positions on nuclear disarmament, which remains the agreed highest priority for the United Nations in the area of disarmament, in accordance with the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2). The Movement remains extremely concerned by the threat to humankind posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use.

The situation in the realm of nuclear disarmament continues to be characterized by an alarming impasse. The nuclear-weapon States have not made progress in eliminating their nuclear weapons. The role of nuclear weapons in security policies of the nuclear-weapon States has not diminished. Nuclear-weapon States are modernizing their nuclear arsenals and planning research on new nuclear warheads, or have announced their intention to develop new delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons, as provided for in the military doctrines of some nuclear-weapon States, including the United States Nuclear Posture Review. The Movement is deeply concerned by this dismal state of affairs as a result of non-compliance by nuclear-weapon States with their legal obligations and unequivocal undertakings.

The international community has waited too long for the realization of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the launching of negotiations on effective measures relating to a cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament. It has become obvious that the existing approach adopted by the nuclear-weapon States — the so-called step-by-step approach — has failed to make concrete and systematic progress towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It is time to take a new and comprehensive approach to nuclear disarmament.

NAM reiterates that the convening of the United Nations High-level International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, as decided through General Assembly resolutions, would provide an important opportunity to review progress made in nuclear disarmament and to further promote that noble objective.

The Movement welcomes the multilateral efforts towards nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Moreover, the Movement takes note of the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, on 7 July 2017 at the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. It is hoped that, when it enters into force, the Treaty will contribute to furthering the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

NAM stresses the importance of enhancing public awareness about the threat posed to humankind by nuclear weapons and the necessity for their total elimination, including through the observance of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

NAM reiterates its deep concern about the greatest threat to peace and security — that posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the military doctrines of the nuclear-weapon States and NATO that set out rationales for the use or threat of use of such weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Such doctrines cannot be justified on any grounds.

NAM once again renews its strong call upon the nuclear-weapon States to fully and urgently comply with their legal obligations and unequivocal undertakings to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear weapons without further delay, in a transparent, irreversible and internationally verifiable manner. The Movement also calls on the nuclear-weapon States to immediately cease their plans to further modernize,

upgrade, refurbish or extend the lives of their nuclear weapons and related facilities.

NAM reaffirms the urgent need for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding instrument to effectively assure all non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances as a matter of high priority, pending the achievement of the total elimination of nuclear weapons in an irreversible, transparent and verifiable manner, which remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. NAM expresses concern that, despite that long-standing request by non-nuclear-weapon States to receive such legally binding assurances, no tangible progress has been achieved.

NAM also reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again are the only absolute guarantees against the catastrophic humanitarian consequences arising from their use. Furthermore, NAM calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to reduce immediately the operational status of nuclear weapons, including through complete detargeting and de-alerting, in order to avoid the risks of the unintentional or accidental use of such weapons.

NAM believes that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and essential for strengthening international peace and security. Non-proliferation derives its legitimacy from the larger objective of nuclear disarmament. Pursuing non-proliferation alone while ignoring nuclear disarmament obligations is both counterproductive and unsustainable. NAM emphasizes that proliferation concerns are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements.

NAM States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regret the failure of the ninth NPT Review Conference to reach consensus on a final outcome document despite the efforts made by NAM delegations and calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to demonstrate political will to enable the 2020 NPT Review Conference to produce concrete recommendations towards achieving nuclear disarmament, the ultimate objective of the NPT.

Recalling the opposition expressed by the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada at the concluding meeting of the 2015 NPT Review Conference, NAM

States parties to the NPT express their disappointment that, as a result of such opposition, consensus on new measures regarding the process to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction was not achieved. That could undermine efforts to strengthen the NPT regime as a whole. NAM re-emphasizes the special responsibility of the sponsoring States of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East in the implementation of that resolution. NAM is concerned that the persistent lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution, contrary to the decisions made at the relevant NPT Review Conferences, undermines the effectiveness and credibility of the NPT and disrupts the delicate balance among its three pillars, taking into account the fact that the indefinite extension of the Treaty, agreed at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, is inextricably linked to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

NAM is of the firm belief that non-proliferation policies should not undermine the inalienable right of States to acquire, have access to, import or export nuclear material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes. NAM reaffirms the inalienable right of each State to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy, including the sovereign right to develop a full national nuclear fuel cycle, for peaceful purposes without discrimination. The Movement once again reaffirms the sovereign right of each State to define its national energy policies. NAM stresses that any decision on multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle shall be made by consensus and without prejudice to the inalienable right of each State to develop a full national nuclear fuel cycle.

NAM recalls the successful conclusion of nuclear negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and E3/EU+3, which resulted in the finalization of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on 14 July 2015. NAM underlines that the agreement showed once again that dialogue and diplomacy are the most appropriate means to resolve such issues, as the Movement has always advocated.

NAM strongly rejects, and calls for the immediate removal of, any limitations and restrictions on exports to developing countries of nuclear material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes, consistent with the provisions of relevant multilateral treaties. In that regard, NAM stresses that the technical cooperation and assistance provided by the International Atomic

Energy Agency (IAEA) in meeting the needs of its member States for material, equipment and technology for peaceful uses of nuclear energy shall not be subject to any conditions incompatible with its Statute.

NAM once again reaffirms the inviolability of peaceful nuclear activities and that any attack or threat of attack, including using information and communication technologies, against peaceful nuclear facilities — operational or under construction — poses a great danger to human beings and the environment and constitutes a grave violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the resolutions of the IAEA General Conference.

NAM recognizes that the primary responsibility for nuclear safety and nuclear security rests with individual States. The Movement further recognizes that the responsibility for nuclear security within a State rests entirely with that State. Any multilateral norms, guidelines or rules on nuclear security should be pursued within the framework of the IAEA. The Movement emphasizes that measures and initiatives aimed at strengthening nuclear safety and nuclear security must not be used as a pretext or leverage to violate, deny or restrict the inalienable right of developing countries to develop research on, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

NAM believes that the nuclear-weapon-free zones established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba, the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, as well as Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free-status, are positive steps and important measures towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. In the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones, it is essential that nuclear-weapon States provide unconditional assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to all States of the zone under any circumstances. NAM calls upon all nuclear-weapon States to ratify related protocols to all treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, withdraw any reservations or interpretative declarations incompatible with their object and purpose and to respect the denuclearization status of those zones.

NAM strongly supports the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. As a priority step to that end, NAM reaffirms the need for the speedy establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the

Middle East, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981), paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus.

NAM reaffirms the urgent need to convene a conference of all States of the region, under the auspices of the United Nations, to negotiate a legally binding treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Pending its establishment, NAM demands that Israel, the only country in the region that has not joined the NPT or declared its intention to do so, renounce any possession of nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT without any precondition or further delay and promptly place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA full-scope safeguards.

NAM expresses great concern over the acquisition of nuclear capability by Israel, which poses a serious and continuing threat to the security of neighbouring and other States, and condemns Israel for continuing to develop and stockpile nuclear arsenals. The Movement also calls for the total and complete prohibition of the transfer of all nuclear-related equipment, information, material and facilities, resources or devices and the extension of assistance in the nuclear-related scientific or technological fields to Israel.

In the light of the time limit, I shall stop at this juncture. The full version of my statement will be submitted to the Secretariat.

Mr. Hattrem (Norway): I have the privilege to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

We welcome the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, with its aim of putting disarmament and non-proliferation at the centre of the work of the United Nations. We join the Secretary-General's call for all States to work together to achieve concrete, verifiable and irreversible steps to prepare for a world without nuclear weapons.

Preparing for a successful 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is an overarching priority. The Treaty has proved resilient and effective. The global stockpile of nuclear weapons has been substantially reduced, the proliferation of nuclear weapons has been curtailed and the benefits of civilian nuclear energy and technology have been shared globally.

Nevertheless, we continue to face serious challenges from a disarmament and non-proliferation perspective. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear weapons programme remains an unacceptable violation of international law and obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), despite promising diplomatic efforts. The Nordic countries stand firmly behind the relevant Security Council resolutions on that issue.

The Nordic countries are committed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and support its continued implementation. It is the best way of ensuring that Iran does not develop nuclear weapons. Therefore, we deeply regret the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA, which has made the agreement vulnerable. We call on Iran to continue its ongoing full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Failure to address those complex challenges could seriously undermine the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

The continued implementation of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty is crucial. We encourage the United States and Russia to extend the Treaty and resolve by diplomatic means the serious concerns about Russia's compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. We call for continued global commitment to the NPT and the commitments undertaken at the Review Conferences, including those related to article VI of the NPT.

A forward-looking agenda for the 2020 review covering all three pillars of the NPT is needed, including strengthening the global norm against nuclear testing by the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; developing an effectively verifiable treaty that bans the production of fissile material; developing credible multilateral solutions to verify future nuclear disarmament; measures to reduce the risk of the accidental use of nuclear weapons; confidence-building measures, including enhanced transparency by nuclear-weapon States; strengthened negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States; addressing the issue of non-strategic nuclear weapons; working towards universal acceptance of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreement and its additional protocol as the global safeguards standard; and making the most of peaceful applications of nuclear technologies to assist efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is deeply disturbing that, more than 20 years after the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction entered into force, we are still witnessing the use of chemical weapons in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia and the United Kingdom. As reported by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, the Syrian regime is responsible for the repeated use of chemical weapons, and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has carried out at least two such attacks.

The Nordic countries condemn all use of chemical weapons. Those responsible must be held accountable. The decisions on attribution taken at the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, held in June, are an important step forward. We fully support the OPCW's implementation of those decisions.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction is another vital pillar of the global disarmament architecture. The universality of the Convention is essential. At the upcoming meeting of States parties we must endeavour to improve response and preparedness, address the relevant developments in life sciences and tackle emerging challenges.

The Nordic countries are firmly committed to the peaceful use and sustainable development of outer space. International cooperation is essential, and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space is the key international body in that regard.

We are also concerned about the increase in serious cyberattacks on civilian infrastructure. We seek to preserve an open, secure, robust and free cyberspace. We all agree that international law applies in cyberspace; now we must focus on its implementation.

The Nordic countries will make a joint statement in the thematic debate on the cluster "Conventional weapons". We will therefore limit our comments here to the following. We welcome the ongoing substantive discussions on new and rapidly evolving technologies, including lethal autonomous weapon systems. We firmly support the Arms Trade Treaty and are pleased to see that it continues to gain ground. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its

Aspects has made important contributions to security. We welcome the German initiative on addressing conventional ammunition in surplus. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions have established humanitarian norms that extend well beyond the States parties to those instruments. Moreover, we underline the importance of including a gender perspective in all arms-control efforts.

Finally, we are concerned about the challenging financial situation facing several conventions and their support services. We urge all States parties to pay their dues on time, in full and without conditions.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) members, namely, Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand and my own country, South Africa.

At the outset, NAC would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chair of this year's First Committee and to assure you of NAC's full cooperation and support with a view to the successful conclusion of our deliberations during the next four weeks.

As we have done in the past, NAC will present a draft resolution to the Committee, which will be introduced during the thematic debate on the cluster "Nuclear weapons".

This year marks the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela, who, in an impassioned speech to the General Assembly on 21 September 1998 (see A/53/PV.7), called on the nuclear-weapon States to make a firm commitment to the speedy, final and total elimination of nuclear weapons and nuclear-weapon capabilities and announced that NAC would be submitting a draft resolution to the First Committee for consideration by the General Assembly. The draft resolution, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda" and adopted as resolution 57/59, was intended to contribute to the elimination of those weapons.

This year also marks 20 years since the founding of NAC, in 1998, when NAC countries considered the continued threat to humankind represented by the prospect of the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon States, as well as by those nuclear-weapon-possessing States that were not parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear

Weapons (NPT) and the attendant possibility of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Throughout the past 20 years, NAC has advocated for the implementation of concrete, transparent, mutually reinforcing, verifiable and irreversible nuclear-disarmament measures and the fulfilment of obligations and commitments within the framework of the NPT. Although some progress has been achieved over this period, it is far from sufficient, and we are deeply concerned that new challenges in international security may continue to be cited as justifications for slow progress. For NAC, the global security environment is not an excuse for inaction; rather, it reinforces the need for urgency. What is lacking are not favourable conditions but political will and determination.

Last year saw the successful conclusion of the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. The adoption, on 7 July 2017, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons expressed the desire of the overwhelming majority in the General Assembly for urgent action. That urgency grew from our increased knowledge of the growing risks and catastrophic humanitarian consequences, including their strong gendered impact, of a nuclear-weapon detonation.

Considering that any use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the principles and rules of international humanitarian law and the fact that their consequences cannot be constrained within borders, the continued reliance upon them in security doctrines and concepts is indefensible and fosters proliferation.

Nuclear disarmament is not only an international legal obligation but also a moral and ethical imperative. egregiously, in spite of the growing international consensus regarding the illegitimacy of nuclear weapons, an estimated 15,000 nuclear devices still exist. Those weapons remain at the heart of the security doctrines of the nuclear-weapon States and those party to alliances with the nuclear-weapon States. Far from strengthening international peace and security, that state of affairs serves to weaken it, aggravating international tensions and conflict and jeopardizing the collective well-being of all States and peoples, as well as the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Given that almost five decades have passed since the entry into force of the NPT, the status quo on nuclear disarmament is unacceptable. NAC believes it is time

for States to finally deliver on their commitments to the elimination of nuclear weapons, in line with NPT obligations, and to safeguard future generations from the danger posed by nuclear weapons. That is the only way to maintain the integrity and sustainability of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

NAC shares a firm commitment to the NPT, which is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It is fundamental to bear in mind that the NPT was adopted and indefinitely extended on the basis of a grand bargain. The nuclear-weapon States legally committed themselves to pursuing and achieving nuclear disarmament, in return for which non-nuclear-weapon States legally committed themselves not to develop nuclear weapons. The presumption of indefinite possession of nuclear weapons runs counter to the object and purpose of the NPT and threatens to erode its credibility and effectiveness.

The Action Plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference provided an important opportunity to put the process towards a nuclear-weapon-free world back on track. The nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their unequivocal undertaking of the 2000 Review Conference to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, and committed to accelerating progress in that regard. The 2010 Action Plan reaffirmed the decisions taken in 1995 and 2000, including the 13 practical steps to advance the implementation of article VI of the NPT.

NAC reaffirms the significant contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to nuclear-disarmament efforts and achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, and reiterates in that regard the importance of the early implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. The inter-Korean dialogue and summits are positive signs towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

The New Agenda Coalition again calls for and expects the implementation by the nuclear-weapon States of their nuclear disarmament commitments — both qualitative and quantitative — in a manner that enables States parties to regularly monitor progress, including through their use of a standard detailed reporting format. That would enhance confidence and trust among not only the nuclear-weapon States but also between the nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States.

The implementation of the NPT's article VI is a legal obligation binding on all States parties. It was on that

basis that NAC welcomed the adoption, on 7 July 2017, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which is an effective legal measure contributing to the implementation of article VI. Additional measures, however, are still needed in order to fully implement article VI of the NPT. We must uphold and preserve the NPT, and the best way to protect it is to implement it. The current review cycle of the NPT presents an opportunity for States parties to undertake a comprehensive review and assessment of the current status of the Treaty, the implementation of various obligations and commitments within its framework and the challenges facing its full implementation.

It is now time for the international community to translate words into concrete action, backed by clear and agreed benchmarks and timelines. Bearing in mind the special responsibility that lies with the nuclear-weapon States, NAC believes that those States should not only implement their existing commitments but also strive to build further on them in order to accelerate fulfilment of their obligations under the NPT.

As a cross-regional grouping, NAC works actively for concrete progress on nuclear disarmament. Achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons remains NAC's primary goal. NAC urges all States to seize the opportunity of the First Committee to make a difference on nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

The African Group sincerely congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-third session. Given your wealth of experience, the Group believes in your ability to steer our work to a successful conclusion. The Group also congratulates the other members of the Bureau on their election. The Group commends your predecessor, Ambassador Hussein Bahr Aluloom, for his leadership and laudable efforts.

The Group aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The seventy-second session of the General Assembly witnessed efforts to address a number of multilateral disarmament and international security issues, including issues related to cyberspace and outer space activities. International security has continued to deteriorate as the world faces immense challenges

to peace and security, particularly the increased threat of terrorism. In that regard, the Group underscores the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in addressing disarmament, non-proliferation and international security, in accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and restates that there are no substitutes for multilateralism in addressing global disarmament issues.

On 20 September, the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons opened for signature. Given the slow progress and frustration that have characterized nuclear disarmament for so many years, the Treaty marks a watershed moment in the drive to rid the world of nuclear weapons. The African Group wishes to underscore that the Treaty, as adopted, reinforces the need for our commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the need to complement it. As the international community awaits the realization of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the African Group seeks more profound and concrete measures in pursuit of the objective of nuclear disarmament.

On 26 September, the General Assembly convened the fifth high-level plenary meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The meeting again served as a reminder of, and underscored, the existential threat posed to humankind as long as nuclear-weapon States continue to possess and modernize those weapons of mass destruction. The Group therefore welcomes and underscores the importance of resolution 70/34 as an integral part of the multilateral disarmament effort.

Seven decades have passed since the world witnessed the first ever use of atomic bombs, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The devastation and impact caused by the twin attacks, including the impact on the environment, continue to be experienced, not only by the people in those areas but by all people around the globe. Therefore, the time has come for the world to speak with unanimity so as to ensure a world free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. It is also the moment to raise our voices against the slow pace and the lack of good faith and commitment on the part of nuclear-weapon States to dismantle those weapons.

Early this year, States parties gathered in Geneva for the second Preparatory Committee meeting for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT.

Coming on the heels of the failure of the ninth Review Conference in 2015 to yield the desired consensus on a final outcome document, despite the concerted efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States, in particular from Africa, we look forward to positive engagement as States parties prepare for preparatory meetings, as another unique opportunity to review the steps taken since 2010, the last time the process produced a successful outcome.

The 2020 Review Conference also offers a platform to restate our commitment to the exceptional role of the NPT as pivotal to our collective resolve to banish nuclear weapons from the arsenals of States, prevent their proliferation and assess the impact of harnessing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and human progress, including through international cooperation in line with article IV of the Treaty.

The threat posed to humankind by the continued existence of nuclear weapons is real. In that regard, the African Group insists on the implementation of all agreed measures and undertakings by the nuclear-weapon States in the context of the Treaty. The setback of the most recent Review Conference remains fresh and etched in our minds. It is therefore hoped that that disappointment will serve as a clear reminder of the need to renew commitments to the overall objective of the Treaty.

The African Group reaffirms the central role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the consolidation of the NPT, as well as in their contributions to addressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation across all regions of the world. The Treaties of Pelindaba, Tlateloco, Rarotonga and Bangkok, the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status all significantly contribute to the overall objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. They enhance global and regional peace and security, strengthen the nuclear-non-proliferation regime and contribute to realizing the objective of nuclear disarmament.

In that context, the African Group remains committed to the Treaty of Pelindaba. Among other things, the Treaty reaffirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and provides a shield for the African territory, including by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting the testing of those weapons on the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

In the same vein, the African Group restates its deep concern about the fact that the commitments and obligations of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, including those in the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, regarding the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, have not been implemented as agreed. The Group remains unequivocal in its disappointment regarding the inability to convene the agreed conference on the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East, which should have been held in 2012. The Group further stresses that the 1995 resolution remains an integral and essential part of the package and the basis upon which consensus was reached on the indefinite extension of the NPT in that year. The Group wishes to highlight the validity of those commitments and obligations until their full implementation.

The African Group underscores the importance of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in continuing to ensure the commitments of States to the implementation of safeguards agreements and in the provision and promotion of technical assistance and cooperation through maximizing the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development.

The African Group emphasizes the humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons at this session, in particular its serious concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use or detonation of nuclear weapons, either by accident or as a deliberate action. The Group notes the strides made by States and continues to call on all States, particularly nuclear-weapon States, to factor into their considerations the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of such weapons on human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among other things, and take the measures and steps necessary to ensure the dismantling and renunciation of such weapons. It is in that context that the African Group strongly supports all efforts aimed at the total elimination and delegitimization of nuclear weapons, including the expected coming into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The continued existence and possession of nuclear weapons do not guarantee security, but represent an affirmation of the risks of their potential use. Our world, including outer space, must be free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It is in that context that the Group stresses the need

for the nuclear-weapon States to cease modernizing, upgrading, refurbishing or extending the lives of their nuclear weapons and related facilities.

The African Group also stresses the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), bearing in mind the special responsibilities of the nuclear-weapon States in that regard. The Group believes that the CTBT offers hope for halting the further development and proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament. The Group welcomes the convening of the tenth Ministerial Conference on the CTBT, held in New York on 20 September 2017, and supports the international community, which has remained committed to promoting the CTBT, and calls on nuclear-weapon States and those yet to accede to the NPT listed in annex 2 of the Treaty that have not yet signed or ratified the CTBT to do so without further delay.

The African Group joins other Member States to reaffirm the importance of the work entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament (CD). The Group expresses concern about the many years of impasse, which has prevented the CD from fulfilling its mandate as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, and calls on the CD to resume substantive work without further delay, taking into account the security interests of all States.

The Group underscores the great importance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and welcomes the conclusion of the efforts of the Working Group on agenda item "Recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons". The Group expresses regret that consensus was not reached on the agenda item on nuclear disarmament and stresses the importance of the United Nations disarmament machinery as an integral aspect of multilateral disarmament. It underscores the significance not only of preserving the Commission but also of realizing its deliberative objectives. The Group looks forward to a successful deliberation on the elements of the agenda items in the current cycle.

The African Group remains deeply concerned about the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of small arms and light weapons, their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, particularly on the continent of Africa. The Group remains committed to the

Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. With the successful conclusion of the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action in June, the Group urges all States to continue to fulfil their obligations.

Finally, the African Group wishes to reiterate the critical importance of political will and transparency in addressing international disarmament and security issues.

Ms. Beckles (Trinidad and Tobago): I have the honour to address the First Committee on all disarmament and international security agenda items on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

At the outset, CARICOM extends its congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee, and we similarly offer our felicitations to the other members of the Bureau. CARICOM pledges its full support as you embark on your chairmanship of this session. We also express our appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom of Iraq, for his stewardship as Chair of the Committee at its seventy-second session.

CARICOM welcomes and supports the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, and we further welcome the three carefully articulated priority areas that form the bedrock of the agenda, namely, disarmament to save humankind, disarmament to save lives and disarmament for future generations.

CARICOM is pleased that the Agenda for Disarmament has as a strong basis the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which, in the words of the Secretary-General, is the world's blueprint for peace and prosperity. CARICOM therefore takes this opportunity to reiterate the importance our region attaches to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the contribution that the Committee can make, not only to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 16.4 but also to the attainment of SDG target 5.2, on the elimination of violence against women and girls.

The tenor of the statements by our Heads of State and Government that echoed through the halls of the Organization just days ago forces us to consider the ominous state of affairs that currently embodies the world in which we live, including in the field of disarmament and international security. The scale

and reach of international terrorism, the increasing influence of non-State actors, new proliferation threats and the continued escalation of strife and conflict among States is unprecedented. CARICOM submits that the urgency of facing up to those global challenges must be intensified amid proliferating signs of uncertainty, instability and fragility.

It has been said many times by CARICOM in the Committee that disarmament is a concern for us, as we are small island developing States that rely on the rule of law at the national and international levels in order to guarantee our right to a secure, sovereign and peaceful existence. CARICOM therefore strongly encourages all States to act consistently within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations on all matters related to disarmament and international security.

The prevalence of gun-related fatalities due to the proliferation of illegal arms and ammunition, illicit drugs, money laundering, cybercrime and other dimensions of transboundary criminal activities pose the most significant threats to the security of CARICOM. However, we are doing our part. The CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security — CARICOM IMPACS — continues to tackle the multidimensional nature of crime and security. In keeping with the 2013 CARICOM crime and security strategy, CARICOM IMPACS has embarked on a number of initiatives and partnerships to track the proceeds of crime. CARICOM IMPACS has also been working on assets recovery in the area of asset tracing, asset management and prosecuting assets forfeiture cases, with capacity-building at the level of the judiciary, prosecutors and detectives.

Illegal firearms feature in many of the crimes of violence and homicides committed in CARICOM member States. CARICOM's response has been to heighten priority of illegal firearms on discussion agendas and it has articulated its support of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as one of the primary international instruments for the control of small arms and light weapons.

In addition, the CARICOM Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons, issued by the thirty-second meeting of its Conference of Heads and Government on 4 July 2011, sought to implement all necessary actions at the national and regional levels to fully combat

the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, in alignment with international instruments, including through the development and implementation of national action plans, capacity-building within national and regional security entities and the implementation and enforcement of policies and legislation.

CARICOM has found non-binding legal agreements to be of tremendous assistance in our attempts to address the illicit arms trade in our region. We therefore reiterate the importance we place on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects as an important instrument in mobilizing international cooperation to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

While we strive for consensus during negotiations on substantive issues related to the Programme of Action, we welcome the outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, annex) of the recently concluded 2018 Review Conference. We are pleased that the outcome document has upheld the recognition of the linkages among small arms issues and gender perspectives. CARICOM is also pleased with the inclusion of overt references to ammunition, whereby States that apply provisions of the Programme of Action to small arms and light weapons ammunition can exchange and, as appropriate, apply relevant experiences, lessons learned and best practices acquired within the framework of other relevant instruments to which States are parties.

In that connection, CARICOM remains firm in its conviction that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) can contribute significantly to reducing the suffering of many of our citizens and countless people around the world, especially women and children who live daily with the deadly and devastating impacts of the unregulated trade in conventional arms. As the life of the ATT progresses beyond the recently concluded fourth Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, CARICOM wishes to underline that, for the ATT to be a success, it must be implemented in good faith by all States parties, including the major manufacturers, exporters and importers of conventional weapons. We welcome Latvia's presidency of the Fifth Conference of States Parties.

I would be remiss if I failed to highlight the continued support that CARICOM receive from the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament

and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The organization has supported and assisted the States members of CARICOM in capacity-building measures and technical assistance programmes. We look forward to continued collaboration in that respect.

With regard to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, CARICOM wishes to recall the words of the Secretary-General when speaking of his agenda for disarmament, namely, that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is in the DNA of the United Nations. Indeed, it was the subject of the very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1946. In that respect, CARICOM is proud to be part of the first densely populated region in the world to declare itself a nuclear-weapon-free zone, pursuant to the Treaty of Tlateloco, which established the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We agree that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is central to the maintenance of international peace and security. The NPT has successfully limited the number of States that possess nuclear weapons. Its safeguards regime provides assurance of the exclusively peaceful nature of civil-nuclear programmes. The NPT is also essential to preserving an environment conducive to disarmament.

CARICOM appeals to all States, including non-parties, to adhere to the non-proliferation and disarmament obligations and commitments under the NPT. In that connection, CARICOM recognizes the preparatory processes leading up to the 2020 NPT Review Conference, and we assure States parties of our intention to be a constructive participant in the Conference itself.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted last year and central in the awarding of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, demonstrated strong international support for a permanent end to the threat posed by nuclear weapons. It was a call to break the stalemate in nuclear disarmament negotiations. CARICOM member States joined like-minded States in the negotiations of that historic Treaty, and we are pleased that since its opening for signature, on 20 September 2017, 69 States have become signatories and 19 have become parties to the Treaty.

CARICOM is proud that one of our member States, Guyana, has already ratified the Treaty, and that Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are signatories. More CARICOM countries are expected to do the same in short order as we seek to contribute to the Treaty's early entry into force and its universal adherence.

CARICOM's long-standing commitment to working in a multilateral environment to address threats posed by weapons of mass destruction has been underscored by our ratification of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Without question, regional progress in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is inextricably linked to our economic viability.

CARICOM has benefited from the support of the International Atomic Energy Agency in strengthening our capacity through the sharing of best practices and the transfer of technology and from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in providing specialized training in emergency response to the deliberate or accidental use of chemical agents.

We also commend the efforts of the CARICOM Regional Coordinator for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in his continued efforts to sensitize CARICOM on responses to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear explosive emergencies. We look forward to participating in the regional conference for the States of Latin America and the Caribbean on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) in the Plurinational State of Bolivia in November, supported by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

There has been significant growth in cybercrime in the Caribbean. Those activities point to the existence of significant cybersecurity vulnerabilities in the protection frameworks for persons, possessions and privacy, which extend more generally to information and critical national infrastructures. Cybercrime could have a devastating impact on national security and, if not addressed urgently, could severely hamper the social and economic development of CARICOM States.

In the CARICOM Strategic Plan 2015-2019, cybercrime is listed as an obstacle and threat to social and sustained economic development in CARICOM. In that connection, the CARICOM cybersecurity and

cybercrime action plan, developed in 2016, seeks to address cybersecurity vulnerabilities in each participating CARICOM country.

Finally, the area of women and disarmament is of particular significance to our region. Trinidad and Tobago, with the support of CARICOM, will again sponsor its biennial draft resolution entitled, “Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control”, during this session of the Committee. We look forward to the support of other members.

Mr. Hassan (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a pleasure for me to deliver a brief statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-third session. We are certain that you will be successful in your work, and we offer you the full cooperation and support of the Arab Group. We also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We highly commend Iraq and Algeria for their chairmanships of the past two sessions of the First Committee.

The Arab Group aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Arab Group reaffirms its principled positions concerning disarmament and international security. It stresses that the establishment of peace, security and stability in the world can be assured only if nuclear weapons are eliminated. We must therefore rid humankind of those weapons and allocate the enormous material and human resources spent on them to development.

In that regard, the Arab Group welcomes the important initiative launched by the Secretary-General last May in the document *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. We hope that the recommendations contained in the document will be implemented by prioritizing measures addressing nuclear disarmament and other weapons of mass destruction, especially in the Middle East, on the basis of clear measures adopted in consultation with Member States.

The Arab Group underscores that the multilateral framework under United Nations auspices, goals and principles, as well as agreed commitments in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations,

are the only sustained way to address disarmament and international security issues. The Arab Group expresses its deep concern about the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament and the implementation of agreed commitments in that regard, in addition to the failure to achieve the universality of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Nuclear States clearly disavow time frames for the implementation of international commitments to completely eliminating nuclear weapons.

The Arab Group welcomes anew the important historical development represented by the conclusion in 2017 of a binding treaty that establishes international norms for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, which helped to bridge a major gap in the area of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction prohibited by binding conventions, in accordance with the most basic rules of international humanitarian law.

The Arab Group stresses that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is not antithetical to the NPT, but it complements it. It promotes the achievement of the NPT goals, in implementation of article VI of that Treaty. In that regard, the Group calls once again for the commitments regarding universal accession to the NPT to be honoured. The Group reiterates that a balance needs to be struck among the three pillars of the NPT and that the imbalance that has arisen is due to the fact that some attribute too much importance to non-proliferation, to the detriment of addressing nuclear disarmament.

We have a tremendous challenge before us, as a result of the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference and the delays by nuclear-weapon States in honouring their commitments. The Group reaffirms the prominent role played by the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in achieving international peace and security and advancing nuclear disarmament efforts throughout the world, especially in the Middle East. The Group stresses once again that Israel's ongoing refusal to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear State and to subject its nuclear facilities to verification under IAEA safeguards constitutes a serious threat to regional and international peace and security and a violation of scores of relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991).

More than 22 years have passed since the adoption, at the 1995 NPT Review Conference, of a resolution on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear

weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, the Arab Group reaffirms its deep concern about the delay in implementing that resolution. The Group underscores that the resolution on establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction was an integral part of the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995.

The Arab Group sought to break the current deadlock with a new initiative, introduced during the 2015 Review Conference. The positive initiative was warmly welcomed by the majority of States but was opposed through a regrettable decision of the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, breaking international consensus in favour of Israel, which has refused to accede to the Treaty from the very beginning. That has raised questions concerning the credibility and seriousness of those States — all the more so given that two of them are depositary States of the Treaty. It is therefore incumbent upon them to work towards achieving the aims of the Treaty. Failure to do so would undermine the Treaty and imperil the stability of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

The Arab Group stresses the need for immediate executive measures to be undertaken in order to establish the Middle East zone. At this session, the Group will again submit the Arab draft resolution entitled “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East”. We call on all States, especially peace-loving States that are mindful of the need to respect the purposes and principles of the United Nations, to fully support the draft resolution without double standards.

The Arab Group will also submit a draft decision at this session calling on the Secretary-General to invite the countries of the region and the three States that have sponsored the resolution on the Middle East since 1995, as they are responsible for implementing that resolution, as well as relevant international organizations, to participate in a negotiations conference on a treaty to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, beginning in 2019, in line with arrangements adopted freely by the States of the region. Such a conference must make its decisions by consensus. This would make clear that the Arab Group shows maximum flexibility and works in a constructive manner within a multilateral framework. The Group is confident that the decision will enjoy the support of all Member States that honour their obligations and commitments under the relevant international resolutions. The Arab Group

is eager to engage in the broadest possible consultations with the parties concerned on this important decision.

The Arab Group once again welcomes the success of the work of the Open-ended Working Group on convening a Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament. We hope that such a session will generate new momentum and lead to an inclusive approach to revitalizing disarmament efforts, in particular nuclear disarmament. Our view is that serious political will is necessary to break the decades-long deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament and, in turn, enable it to adopt a programme of work so that negotiations can begin and the Conference, as the sole forum tasked with negotiating treaties on disarmament, can carry out its work. The Arab Group hopes that the Disarmament Commission will succeed, during its current session, in reaching objective recommendations and building on the relative progress that was achieved at the previous session.

The Group believes that outer space must be free of any arms race or conflict and used only for peaceful purposes. To date, relevant international agreements have played a positive role in promoting the peaceful use of outer space and organizing the activities undertaken there. However, the remaining lacunae in that framework require us to quickly reach a new, binding instrument to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space, prohibit armed attacks against objects in outer space, and prohibit certain States from launching an arms race by developing technologies and weapons to be placed in outer space or used against space objects. The Group welcomes the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts on reaching objective elements of a legal and binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space, in line with resolution 72/250. Our hope is that the Group of Governmental Experts will be able to facilitate the beginning of negotiations on an internationally binding instrument as soon as possible.

On conventional weapons, the Arab Group stresses the extreme importance of activating the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, especially to put an end to the dangerous phenomenon of those weapons increasingly falling into the hands of terrorists or illegal armed groups. In that regard, we welcome the unanimous adoption of the final outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, annex) of the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action.

The full text of our statement will be made available on PaperSmart.

Mr. Locsin (Philippines): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

ASEAN congratulates you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election as, respectively, Chair and Bureau of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We assure you, Mr. Chair, of our support in advancing the important work of the Committee. We also wish to recognize the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for their tireless and consistent efforts in advancing the disarmament agenda at the United Nations.

ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. ASEAN's collective efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation ultimately and strongly support the goal of sustaining and maintaining a world that is peaceful and prosperous, for the benefit of our peoples.

ASEAN welcomes the comprehensive Agenda for Disarmament launched by Secretary-General António Guterres in May. We reaffirm that it is in the interests of national, collective and human security, as well as the survival of humankind, that nuclear weapons never be used again under any circumstances and that the total elimination of nuclear weapons remain the highest priority of the United Nations.

ASEAN shares the desire and aspirations of a world free of nuclear weapons. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional nuclear-weapon detonations 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, and we continue to welcome all efforts leading to that end. That belief underpins ASEAN's commitment to preserving its region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, as enshrined in the Bangkok Treaty. ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty and continues to stress the importance of the Treaty's full and effective implementation.

ASEAN is implementing the Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty for the period 2018-2022. ASEAN also reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to which all members of ASEAN are parties. The NPT has been and will remain the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We commend the work of Poland in chairing the second NPT Preparatory Committee in Geneva this year, and we are especially pleased that a representative of ASEAN, Malaysia, has been elected as the Chair of the third NPT Preparatory Committee, which will take place in New York in 2019, in preparation for the 2020 Review Conference.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a historic and groundbreaking agreement. Since it opened for signature last year, 69 States have signed it and another 19 have ratified it. Along with SEANWFZ and other nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, the Treaty constitutes a vital step towards global nuclear disarmament and complements existing non-proliferation and global nuclear weapons-related instruments. The Treaty would also make a significant contribution towards the shared goal of making our region and the world free of nuclear weapons. The signatures of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Viet Nam and Thailand, as well as the ratification of the Treaty by Thailand and Viet Nam, are significant steps towards the early entry into force of that historic legal instrument.

ASEAN also stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. While welcoming the recent ratification of the Treaty by Thailand, ASEAN urges annex 2 States, whose signature and ratification are required for the entry into force of the Treaty, to complete their signature and ratification as soon as possible.

ASEAN welcomes the inter-Korean summits, as well as the summit between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Singapore. We also welcome the Panmunjom Declaration on Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula and the joint statement signed by the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We urge all concerned parties to continue working towards the realization of lasting peace and stability on a denuclearized Korean peninsula. We welcome

the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's stated commitment to complete denuclearization and its pledge to refrain from further nuclear and missile tests at this time. We reiterate our support for all relevant Security Council resolutions and international efforts to bring about the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which will contribute to peace and stability in the region.

At the same time, ASEAN reaffirms the inalienable right of every State to the peaceful use of nuclear science, technology and applications, through international technical assistance and cooperation, for national economic and social development, including in the areas of human health, food and agriculture, and climate change. In that regard, we look forward to formalizing relations between ASEAN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to promote greater cooperation on issues related to nuclear safety, security and safeguards, including capacity-building.

We welcome the successful convening of the fifth annual meeting of the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy (ASEANTOM), the five-year ASEANTOM work plan and the ongoing negotiations on ASEAN-IAEA practical arrangements.

We recognize the threat and danger of the existence and use of chemical, biological and radiological weapons and call for universal adherence to applicable international legal instruments prohibiting them. We welcome in particular the progress made in eliminating chemical-weapons stockpiles since the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, 20 years ago.

ASEAN emphasizes the importance of the full and effective implementation of the non-proliferation regime, including Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). In that regard, greater coherence and cooperation are needed among States on intelligence-gathering, capacity-building and assistance. Furthermore, industry, academia and civil society have an important contribution to make to realizing an effective non-proliferation regime.

On conventional weapons, ASEAN recognizes the legitimate right and authority of sovereign nations to use conventional weapons to maintain internal security and to defend national integrity. At the same time, the international community must recognize the growing illicit proliferation of conventional weapons, which hampers economic and social progress and threatens peace and security.

For ASEAN, the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is key. We welcome the adoption during the French presidency of this year's outcome document, which is annexed to the report of the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3). We also take note of the discussions at the fourth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty and at the eighth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

ASEAN looks forward to the upcoming seventeenth Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. We have made a contribution in the form of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre, headquartered in Phnom Penh, in addressing the humanitarian aspect of unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war.

At the regional level, ASEAN continues to address issues related to conventional weapons through various frameworks, including the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, the annual meeting of ASEAN Police Chiefs, the ASEAN Forensic Science Institute and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

ASEAN is hopeful that productive disarmament work will continue as we begin a three-year cycle of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. As we move forward with deliberations, we wish to stress our recognition that States have a legitimate right to ensure their own security, but that should not come at the expense of the collective security of all States. In that regard, ASEAN recognizes the value of multilateralism in instituting a rules-based approach to norms and as a tool for building trust.

Finally, ASEAN expresses its readiness to engage with all Member State and concerned stakeholders as we embark on the work of the First Committee this year.

The Chair: I thank the Permanent Representative of the Philippines not only for his kind words of support to the Chair and other officers of the Committee, but also for respecting the time limit.

(spoke in French)

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Bylica (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee and assure you of the EU's full cooperation and support. We will participate in this year's session with one major objective in mind — that of upholding the integrity of the rules-based international system, with effective multilateralism as a key principle and the United Nations at its core. That is indispensable for maintaining international peace and security.

We share the concern of the Secretary-General over the current security environment, which is characterized by volatility, unpredictability and complexity. Bearing in mind the current severe and ever-changing security environment, we stress the need to preserve and further advance the general arms-control and disarmament processes, and call for further progress on all aspects of disarmament to enhance global security.

The viability and effectiveness of non-proliferation, arms limitation and disarmament agreements require that those agreements be fully complied with and enforced. It is important that all parties contribute to improving the strategic context for arms control and disarmament and avoid eroding the rules-based multilateral system. We must endeavour to decrease tensions, restore dialogue and trust, explore further transparency and confidence-building measures and move from confrontation to cooperation. Joint international efforts are required more than ever to meet global security challenges and resolve regional conflicts.

We are gravely concerned about the continued non-compliance of some States with their non-proliferation obligations. As emphasized by the Secretary-General in his *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, the international community must ensure accountability and end impunity for such violations. We appreciate his clear condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, his support for the establishment of an attribution mechanism to identify perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons, his engagement in promoting the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and his appeal to preserve the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in order to ensure the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

The EU is appalled by the re-emergence of chemical weapons in recent years in the Middle East, Asia and now Europe. We are seriously concerned about any opposition to strengthening the capacity of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to address that issue. The EU condemns in the strongest possible terms the fact that the Syrian Arab Armed Forces have used chemical weapons on four occasions, including sarin in the city of Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017, in an attack that killed dozens, as confirmed by the report of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (S/2017/904, annex).

The EU also condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of sulfur mustard by Da'esh on two occasions, as confirmed by the reports of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. We support the work of the OPCW and its Fact-finding Mission, the Commission of Inquiry and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. We are deeply concerned by continuing reports pointing to the use of chemical weapons in different locations in Syria in recent months, including a devastating chemical attack on Douma, which killed dozens and is under ongoing investigation.

We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to honour its obligations as a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, fully cooperate with the OPCW, give full disclosure of its chemical-weapons programmes, including declaring the chemical weapons it still possesses, and destroy its chemical-weapons programme in a complete and irreversible manner. The EU condemns in the strongest terms any use of those abhorrent weapons of mass destruction, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons. There can be no impunity, and those responsible must be held accountable.

In that context, the EU and its member States support the recent decision of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to enhance the OPCW Technical Secretariat's capacity to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, as well as to develop universal attribution arrangements. We reiterate our continued commitment to the implementation of that decision, as stated by EU Heads of State and Government. The EU has imposed

restrictive measures on high-level Syrian officials and scientists for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons and will consider further measures, as appropriate. On 15 October, EU Foreign Ministers will adopt a new regime of restrictive measures to address the use and proliferation of chemical weapons, and we look forward to early progress on the listing of relevant individuals and entities.

The EU reiterates its condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the March attack in Salisbury. Last March, the European Council agreed with the assessment of the United Kingdom Government that it was highly likely that the Russian Federation was responsible and that there is no plausible alternative explanation. The EU has repeatedly expressed its support for the actions taken by the United Kingdom in investigating the attack, involving the use of a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia. The information provided by the United Kingdom investigation concluded that the two suspects are officers from the Russian military intelligence service. We reaffirm our solidarity with the United Kingdom and commend the United Kingdom for its transparency and the progress in the investigation, which we hope will soon lead to the prosecution of the perpetrators of those abhorrent acts.

We reaffirm our strong support for the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). The EU welcomes the successful launch of the current BWC intersessional process, which is crucial in promoting and furthering the implementation of the Convention. We wish to highlight our serious concern over the critical financial situation that is putting the BWC's future operation, the next Meeting of States Parties and the very existence of the Implementation Support Unit at risk. We urge States parties and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to find a solution to that without delay.

The EU reiterates its concerns raised by the increased ability and willingness of State and non-State actors to pursue their objectives by undertaking malicious cyberactivities that threaten international peace and security. In that light, the EU is gravely concerned over the attempt by Russian military intelligence officers to undermine the integrity of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as reported by

the Netherlands, which hosts the Organization. That aggressive cyberoperation demonstrates grave contempt for the solemn purpose of the OPCW, which works to eradicate chemical weapons worldwide, notably under a United Nations mandate. EU member States deplore such hostile cyberoperations, which undermine international law and international institutions.

EU member States reaffirm their commitment to upholding the rules-based international system and defending international institutions from those that seek to do them harm, by improving and strengthening stability in cyberspace, including through the United Nations. We call on the Secretary-General to continue to study and implement the 2015 measures to promote stability and security in cyberspace, and we look forward to the convening of a new Group of Governmental Experts in 2019. The EU will prioritize a consensus draft resolution that reaffirms the view articulated in previous reports of the Group, including the application of international law in cyberspace; the norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour of States; confidence-building measures and capacity-building as a basis for future work. The draft resolution should also underline the importance of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in cyberspace.

The ongoing diplomatic efforts with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are a positive development that contributes to easing tensions on the Korean peninsula. The EU urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to engage seriously in the follow-on negotiations and embark on a credible path towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization and the abandonment of all other weapons-of-mass-destruction programmes. Until the Democratic People's Republic of Korea takes concrete steps towards denuclearization, we will continue to strictly enforce existing sanctions, and we call upon all States to do the same. We call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to maintain its declared suspension of testing of nuclear weapons and of ballistic-missile launches and to comply with its obligations under multiple Security Council resolutions, including by returning to compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards at an early date and to signing and ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay.

We recall that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), negotiated with regard to the

Iranian nuclear programme, is a key element of the global non-proliferation architecture and a significant achievement of multilateral diplomacy, endorsed by the Security Council through resolution 2231 (2015). In that context, the EU deeply regrets the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA. As confirmed by 12 consecutive reports issued by the IAEA, most recently in its report of 30 August, Iran has continued to implement its nuclear-related commitments, and it must continue to do so. Alongside implementation by Iran of its nuclear-related commitments, the lifting of sanctions constitutes an essential part of the JCPOA. Work is under way towards establishing a legal entity to allow European companies to continue their legitimate trade with Iran, in line with Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). We call upon Iran to play a constructive role in the region and not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic-missile technology, which are inconsistent with Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), and to cease arms transfers, which are prohibited under Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015).

The EU has repeatedly stressed the need to implement all obligations and commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of article VI, with the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We recall that all States parties have committed to pursuing policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons. In a holistic approach, we continue to actively promote the universalization and prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, advocate immediate negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material cut-off treaty, and support international efforts on nuclear-disarmament verification and the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

We continue to encourage the United States and the Russian Federation to extend the New START Treaty, seek further reductions to their arsenals — including strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons — and pursue further discussions on confidence-building, transparency, verification activities and reporting, taking into account the special responsibility of the States that possess the largest nuclear

arsenals. Given the severe security environment, we encourage all States concerned to take appropriate risk-reduction measures, which are important to also ensure the safety and security of their nuclear arsenals. We call on Russia to address the serious concerns regarding its compliance with the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty) in a substantial and transparent manner. We ask the United States and the Russian Federation to remain engaged in active dialogue to preserve the INF Treaty and ensure its full and verifiable implementation, which is crucial to the security of Europe and other regions.

We emphasize that all existing and future weapons systems must be developed, deployed and used in conformity with international law, including human rights law and international humanitarian law. We firmly believe that humans must continue to be able to make decisions with regard to the use of lethal force, maintain control over the lethal-weapons systems that they use and remain accountable for life-and-death decisions.

Illicit, poorly regulated or unregulated flows of arms and ammunition threaten peace and security, fuel terrorism and organized crime and have a wide range of humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences. In that context, the EU welcomes the outcome of the third Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (A/CONF.192/2018, RC/3, annex) and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The EU will continue to take a strong stand to promote respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians in all conflict situations. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to reinforce synergies across the United Nations system with the aim of maximizing progress towards peace, security, sustainable development and human rights.

We encourage all Member States to mainstream gender issues in their policies and programmes and to collect gender-disaggregated data for the relevant indicators. The EU emphasizes that gender equality and the empowerment of women are important horizontal priorities for the EU.

I will submit the full text of our statement to the Secretariat.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I remind speakers to kindly limit the length of their statements to eight minutes when speaking in their national capacity and to 13 minutes when speaking on behalf of groups.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiola (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. You can count on the support of my delegation in all of your efforts. I take this opportunity to also congratulate the rest of the members of the Bureau, and we thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her excellent statement this morning.

The First Committee does not meet in a vacuum. The current international context is increasingly worrisome, characterized by a complex climate that is full of uncertainty, risks and threats to security, the likes of which we have not witnessed during the post-Cold War era.

While we welcome the historic step to attain and sustain a world free of nuclear weapons through the adoption and opening for signature of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we note with deep concern the growing number of voices promoting increases in military expenditure, including nuclear arsenals, which represents unacceptable rhetoric about the threat of the use of force in the framework of the modernization of nuclear weapons. Trivializing the use of nuclear weapons is unacceptable, as it gives rise to uncertainty, creates greater risks and jeopardizes prospects for peace, as well as clearly contravening the Charter of the United Nations.

The architecture of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in which humankind's hopes for development are enshrined, are, unfortunately, under constant threat owing to the possibility of an intentional or accidental nuclear detonation and to the arms race and the vast financial resources allocated thereto, which contrast, offensively, with those intended for development. Development and peace are intimately interlinked, just as disarmament and peace are mutually reinforcing processes, and they must be the only priorities for States.

Given this critical scenario, the work of the First Committee is as relevant and current as it was at the end of the Second World War. Mexico trusts and supports

multilateralism as the only way to achieve sustainable peace, which translates into security and development for all nations and communities. The existence of nuclear-weapon-free zones creates an ideal environment in which to achieve those objectives. Such zones are a clear expression of prevention and sustainable peace, and their existence and creation are completely relevant to the First Committee.

Due to their devastating power, indiscriminate effect on innocent civilians, humanitarian impact and harmful effects on the health, development and very existence of humankind, nuclear weapons cannot be considered beneficial in the hands of some but harmful in the hands of others. That double standard is an incentive for proliferation and is contrary to the letter and spirit of the agreements that the international community has forged during the 73 years of existence of the United Nations.

We recall the ethical responsibility of the international community to act urgently and decisively and adopt the effective measures necessary to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons and prevent the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of their use. It is untenable to anchor the security of a few States in devices that ensure the destruction of humankind. Mexico therefore is actively promoting the signing and ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in order to ensure its entry into force and subsequent universalization and implementation. Mexico urges all Member States to sign and ratify it as a clear demonstration of their commitment to international obligations in the area of disarmament.

Robust global governance in this area will be achieved only when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is made universal and fully complied with and when the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons enter into force and become universal. The limited progress in the fulfilment of nuclear disarmament commitments and obligations under the NPT is undermining the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. The health of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime depends on the fulfilment of the commitments and obligations regarding non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy stipulated in the Treaty.

In addition to the latent threat posed by the 15,000 nuclear warheads still in existence, we cannot ignore

other recurrent threats from the use of chemical or biological weapons, whose appalling effects on innocent civilians we have recently witnessed.

In addition to the reluctance of some States to completely eliminate their mass-destruction capabilities, it is also worrying that outer space is once again being considered as a viable and legitimate setting to deploy all kinds of weapon systems. Mexico reiterates that the exploration and use of outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, must be carried out exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all countries, regardless of their level of economic or scientific development.

Small arms and light weapons claim more victims than any other type of weapon. They cause almost half of all violent deaths in the world and remain the main instrument employed in armed conflict, fuelling senseless spirals of violence, facilitating armed violence and promoting transnational organized crime and terrorism. Preventing and combating trafficking is a priority issue and of national interest for Mexico. It is a matter of national security, public security and, consequently, sustainable development and peace.

Mexico attaches the highest priority to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as a universal instrument that contributes to a comprehensive vision of the problem of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, by considering its causes and consequences for peace, security and sustainable development. We welcome the adoption of the outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, annex) of the Review Conference of the Programme of Action last June, and we are pleased that it includes crucial elements to combat that scourge, for example in the case, for the first time, of ammunition.

My country also welcomes the efforts to promote the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and capacity-building in various regions of the world. The national, regional and international workshops organized by the United Nations for the effective implementation of the ATT are key elements to help all Member States to establish controls and safeguards against irresponsible transfers of weapons and to prevent their diversion into the hands of organized crime or terrorist groups.

It is necessary to achieve consistency in the implementation of the commitments of our States to preventing and combating illicit trafficking. With a

comprehensive and strategic approach that involves implementing the Programme of Action, the ATT and the Firearms Protocol, we will be contributing to progress towards each one and, in turn, SDG target 16.4.

Although they are less tangible and visible, we must address the implications for international security of the advances made in the field of information and telecommunications. Mexico strongly advocates for timely deliberations by the United Nations on this issue in a way that encompasses a broad vision of artificial intelligence and rapid technological change and takes a balanced view of related concerns regarding security, development and the exercise of freedoms and rights.

The full text of this statement will be made available on PaperSmart.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident that your acumen and wisdom will allow you to successfully lead the deliberations of this important Committee. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and wish them every success.

Allow me to also express my sincere gratitude to the members of the Bureau of the First Committee at its seventy-second session, as well as the secretariat of the Committee, which provided me with great assistance and allowed me to accomplish my task as Chair of the First Committee last year.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The maintenance of peace is one of the four main purposes for the establishment of the United Nations, while the international peace and security system is essential to the functioning of international instruments and conventions on disarmament. That is why Iraq believes that preserving and maintaining international peace and security are a joint responsibility that we must all shoulder, especially in the light of today's complex security environment. Iraq supports all efforts aimed at ensuring the universality of disarmament treaties and conventions.

My country's delegation joins many countries in stressing the importance of global accession to

international conventions on nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and of ensuring full compliance with all of them without exception. We also stress the importance of the complete elimination of those weapons. That is what provides true safeguards against the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction and allows us to achieve international peace and security to ensure a safe and peaceful world for our societies and future generations.

Iraq once again stresses the importance of adopting a multilateral approach to disarmament and non-proliferation. We also stress the importance of the role played by the Conference on Disarmament as the only multilateral negotiation forum on disarmament. We welcome the adoption of decision CD/2119 in February by the Conference, under the leadership of Sri Lanka. That decision provides for the establishment of five subsidiary bodies to discuss the agenda items of the Conference. We commend the efforts made by the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies and the adoption by the Conference of four reports (CD/2138, CD/2139, CD/2140 and CD/2141) prepared by them.

At the same time, we regret that the Conference was unable to adopt a thematic report reflecting the efforts made during this year's session of the Conference and instead adopted a procedural report (CD/WP.610). We also regret that the Conference was unable to provide any recommendations on the programme of action.

That is why we must redouble our efforts to reach an agreement on a comprehensive and balanced programme of action that addresses all the concerns of Member States. We must demonstrate political will and be sufficiently flexible to revitalize the Conference, especially given the current complicated circumstances that the international community is witnessing — increased regional conflicts and terrorist threats and the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — which together could truly jeopardize international peace and security.

Iraq welcomes the successful conclusion of the work of the Open-ended Working Group for a Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament. In that regard, Iraq stresses the importance of the role played by the United Nations Disarmament Commission as the multilateral deliberative body entrusted with addressing disarmament issues.

My delegation welcomes the agreement reached in April 2017 and the recommendations concerning

practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We hope that that achievement will generate new momentum during this session to reach an agreement on the agenda items regarding nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, in addition to agenda item 101 (aa), on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities.

Iraq welcomes the outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, annex) of the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in 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. We support the redoubling of international efforts to establish an integrated system to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Iraq reaffirms its support for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world as an important step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. We call for the implementation of the resolution of the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and for the extension of that resolution, as provided for in the outcome document of the 2010 Review Conference.

In that regard, Iraq stresses the importance of undertaking serious efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. My country's Government believes that such a zone would undoubtedly contribute to strengthening international efforts to ensure nuclear disarmament and maintain international peace and security.

Iraq believes that it is of paramount importance for Israel to eliminate its nuclear weapons and accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon State. It is also important for Israel to subject its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regimes. That is an urgent necessity and it is essential to establish such a zone.

My country is committed to the multilateral framework. As part of the Arab Group, we are submitting a draft decision asking the Secretary-General to call upon countries of the region, including

the three countries that sponsored the 1995 resolution on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, to participate in a conference to establish that zone.

Mr. Hajnoczi (Austria): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election, as well as the other members of the Bureau, and assure you, Sir, of our full support.

Austria aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Peace and security cannot be achieved without disarmament, and progress on disarmament is needed most urgently at a time when mutual trust is eroding, major arms control treaties are under pressure and the human cost of armed conflict and violence is high, hampering sustainable development.

The Secretary-General's Disarmament Agenda appeals to the strengths of multilateralism and provides us with a concrete compass of disarmament measures. We welcome his strong call to action and will engage in translating his Agenda into action, championing a number of priorities. Partnership among States, international and regional organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and civil society is crucial.

Urgent action is needed on nuclear disarmament. Tension among nuclear-weapon States has reached a new peak in an environment even more complex and fragile than during the Cold War. We are confronted with a new cycle of modernization and upgrading of arsenals, the development of faster delivery systems and attempts to make nuclear weapons easier to use. As Austrian Chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, remarked on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons,

“Let us not lose sight of what nuclear weapons represent: the threat to indiscriminately kill hundreds of thousands of people and cause horrific humanitarian suffering for many more. Nuclear weapons also pose an existential threat to all other States, since their catastrophic humanitarian consequences do not know any borders.”

Nuclear disarmament is therefore a humanitarian imperative. It is enshrined in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the cornerstone of our non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We must ensure that the legal obligations of the

NPT are fully implemented and the normative realm of the Treaty is preserved. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is an important contribution to achieve exactly that. Following decades of stalemate in the field of multilateral nuclear disarmament, it provides a legal pathway for the full implementation of article VI of the NPT. As the President of the ICRC, Peter Maurer, stated recently:

“By signing and ratifying the Treaty, States are sending a clear signal that any use, threat of use or possession of these weapons is unacceptable in humanitarian, moral, and now legal terms.”

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has the same objective as the NPT. It is fully compatible with, and complementary to, the NPT and it strengthens the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards system that is based on the NPT. As such, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons constitutes an essential element of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world, which will bring more security for all. With 69 signatures and 19 ratifications to date, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is well on its way to a swift entry into force. I call on all States that have not already done so to accede to the historic Treaty.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is another landmark treaty that supports the full implementation of the NPT. We warmly welcome the ratification of Thailand to the Treaty and its signing by Tuvalu. We appeal to all States that have not yet done so to urgently sign and ratify the Treaty, in particular those States whose ratifications are required for entry into force.

Throughout history, warfare has always been closely linked to technological innovation. The potential impact of technological progress, in particular artificial intelligence, on international law and international humanitarian law deserves more attention. Despite the progress achieved this year by the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems, the ethical, political and legal questions posed by those systems have not yet been sufficiently addressed. It is not acceptable that they target and attack without human intervention. In that context, the international community is called upon to act before diplomacy is overtaken by facts. To address undesirable developments in the near future,

Austria is proposing a legally binding instrument to ensure human control over critical functions in lethal autonomous weapon systems. Today, conflicts are increasingly taking place in urban areas. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is therefore a particular concern for my country. The use of explosive weapons by not only armed forces but also non-State actors in conflicts all over the world constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law, resulting in tens of thousands of civilian deaths annually. The short- and long-term humanitarian effects cause far too many direct victims and also make affected areas de facto uninhabitable, while the urban context reinforces them, and they are evidently among the root causes of people being internally displaced or compelled to flee their countries.

Austria therefore reaffirms its commitment to reducing the devastating humanitarian harm caused by explosive weapons in populated areas. We call on all States to avoid or minimize the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

On the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), we think it is now crucial to work for its thorough national implementation and universalization. The ATT is also historic for bringing the gender dimension into a security-related treaty. We are also in favour of placing greater emphasis on gender considerations, not only in our speeches here but even more so in the implementation of disarmament treaties.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions are outstanding examples of effective multilateralism that have saved thousands of lives, recognized victims' rights and decontaminated areas for the benefit of the affected communities. Austria calls on those States that have not yet done so to accede to those two important Conventions.

Austria condemns in the strongest terms the use of any weapons of mass destruction, including the use of any chemical weapons. There can be no impunity for the use of those abhorrent weapons and those responsible must be held accountable. In that context, Austria supports the recent decision by the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction to enhance the capacity of the Organization on the Prohibition of

Chemical Weapons to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons, and Austria is committed to contributing to the implementation of the Convention.

Austria is proud to have joined the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, is appalled by the repeated use of chemical weapons by both the Syrian Arab Republic and Da'esh, and reiterates its condemnation of the attacks in Salisbury, Malaysia and Iraq.

I will stop here due to the time limitation. Members can find our views on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear and missile programme and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in our full statement to be submitted to PaperSmart.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I shall now call on those representatives wishing to speak in exercise of the right of reply. In accordance with the rules of procedure, the first intervention is limited to 10 minutes and the second intervention to five minutes.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I am exercising my right of reply to respond to the comments made earlier by the representative of Egypt.

I would like to say that the United States continues to strongly support the long-term goal of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems, alongside a comprehensive and durable regional peace. We are committed to supporting the States of the region, promoting regional dialogue and undertaking practical steps to advance the establishment of such a zone.

We remain convinced, however, that the primary burden for achieving progress on such a zone lies with the States of the region and not with the sponsors of the resolution of the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, or with the international community more broadly. We have encouraged all the States of the region concerned to pursue progress on the establishment of such a zone in a cooperative and pragmatic manner, on the basis of direct, inclusive and consensus-based dialogue. The new League of Arab States initiative, however, does none of that. As a result, the United States will oppose the initiative.

Given the political and security realities in the region, we believe that the most productive way ahead

would be for the States of the region to explore practical steps that could be undertaken, on a voluntary basis and in cooperation with other States of the region, to build trust and promote regional conditions conducive to the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

It is a recognized principle that such a zone must be based on arrangements that are freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. Efforts that contradict that basic principle and instead seek to coerce an outcome through multilateral action or by holding the NPT review process hostage are fundamentally unconstructive and will not produce meaningful results. The NPT review process can and should provide support to regional efforts towards the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, but the last two decades have shown us that the NPT review process cannot be an effective mechanism for driving progress on this issue.

The United States submitted a working paper (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.33) to the 2018 Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference, entitled “Establishing regional conditions conducive to a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems”, which is available on the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs website. The paper unequivocally reaffirms United States support for the long-term goal of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and seeks to offer constructive ideas that are firmly grounded in political and security realities in the region.

We submitted the paper because we believe that creative thinking and new approaches are needed to make meaningful progress on the issue and because past approaches have not proven effective. The paper does not seek to impose preconditions for a zone or dictate a path ahead. Instead, we view the paper as an invitation to dialogue with — and more importantly among — the regional States regarding what can be done to build trust and address underlying conditions that have impeded progress. Ultimately, the decision regarding how to proceed on a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction is up to the States of the region and cannot be imposed by outside parties.

Finally, the United States stands ready to support any approach that has consensus support among all the regional States and is based on direct and inclusive dialogue. We believe that such an approach holds

greater promise than repackaging failed approaches that lack consensus support in the region and focus more on process than substance.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): In his statement delivered on behalf of the group of Nordic countries, the representative of Norway referred to the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and its reports. The JIM did not fulfil its mandate; rather, it fired the bullet of mercy on itself. From the beginning, the JIM was more of an intelligence mechanism than anything else and its activities in my country were controlled by terrorism-sponsoring States. If it had been a fair mechanism, then it would have continued to function and survived. I kindly ask all those wishing to address this issue to do so based on information rather than on ignorance.

Some of the Nordic countries on behalf of which the representative of Norway spoke are part of the so-called international coalition that claims to be combating Da'esh but is at the same time destroying the infrastructure of Syria and attacking bases of the Syrian army in order to allow Da'esh to advance and control territories and strategic positions. The so-called international coalition provides aerial coverage for the terrorist organization Da'esh.

My country has complied with all the provisions of the Convention on Chemical Weapons and has fulfilled all of its obligations. In that regard, the representative of the European Union (EU) delivered a statement that is unacceptable and that we reject. The EU knows well that our chemical arsenal was destroyed outside my country. The representative of the EU presented false information, which we are used to hearing, and launched false accusations against countries that do not implement and support EU instructions.

Some EU countries have provided armed terrorist groups, in particular the two terrorist organizations Da'esh and the Nusra Front, with chemical substances to be used in Syria. Several airports in the EU act as the principal hubs for transferring weapons, equipment and munitions to terrorist groups that operate on Syrian territories. If the representatives of the European Union were serious, then they would have undertaken investigations to reveal the truth instead of launching false accusations; they would have revealed to the world which countries are involved in providing toxic chemical substances to armed terrorist organizations operating in my country; and they would have revealed

which countries are managing the transfer of equipment, munition and weapons to Security Council-designated terrorist organizations.

Mr. Hassan (Egypt): I listened very carefully to the intervention made by our colleague from the United States regarding the proposal put forward by the Group of Arab States. I honestly think that most of the elements that he referred to are already included in that proposal. I believe that the proposal that we put forward ensures inclusiveness and calls on all countries in the region and interested parties to participate in dialogue and negotiations. We did not name any single country in the region specifically. We have also made it clear that we want all decisions of the proposed conference to be taken by consensus and its outcome to be arrived at freely.

All that we have proposed is an institutional process to implement a long-standing commitment to dialogue and negotiations, without any reference to holding the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) process hostage to the establishment of a zone in the Middle East. The initiative focuses on a United Nations track. We did not refer to anything regarding the forthcoming session of the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

We hope that the United States will engage with the proposal, which aims solely to address one of the most important outstanding international commitments in keeping with the parameters that have been repeatedly stated by the United States itself. We therefore look forward to consultations and are open to further ideas for reaching a consensus on this matter.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor for a second time. I wish to make two brief points.

First, to respond to the comments just made by the Egyptian representative, it is my understanding that the initiative in question does not have the support of all the countries of the region, and I would ask my Egyptian colleague if indeed all countries of the region support the initiative. From the beginning, we have said clearly that any initiative with regard to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East needs to be acceptable to all countries of the region.

As I said, the initiative does not provide what we think would be a long-term solution to the situation in

the region. I have already provided the United States views on the initiative and we will oppose it. Once again, we are open to working with any countries or organizations that want to put forward practical and realistic proposals that encourage regional dialogue and inclusiveness, which the Egyptian initiative does not do.

Secondly, regarding the remarks made by the Syrian representative, he said that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) killed itself. Really? The JIM killed itself? We all know how the JIM died — in the Security Council — and we all know who killed it.

The situation is plain and simple. Syria has not complied with its obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, a fact of which we are all aware. I would therefore appeal to the Syrian representative to stop making that ridiculously false claim. Syria has repeatedly used chemical weapons against its own people and, as United States representatives have said in countless forums, Syria will be held accountable for its use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): As usual, the representative of the United States Administration is trying to impress us with his views in order to ensure that no one is suspicious of the actions undertaken by his Administration — providing armed terrorist groups on Syrian territory with chemical agents, training them and transporting the leaders of those groups to various locations. Successive United States Administrations have sent chemical-agent experts to Syrian territories, accompanied by experts from Arab and regional countries, in order to train armed terrorist groups on how to mix toxic chemical agents and use them.

Moreover, United States Administrations have always prevented any impartial investigation in order to hide the truth. They have instructed the terrorist groups that they have sponsored in my country to engage in chemical activities through their representatives, in particular through the so-called White Helmets organization, which is the media arm of Al-Nusra Front affiliated with the Al-Qaida organization.

The United States has always been responsible for providing guidance to armed terrorist groups that

operate in Syrian territory on how to use chemical weapons. In that regard, we will never forget the lies of the State Department regarding weapons of mass destruction that lead to the invasion and destruction of Iraq. We are all aware of those lies and we know what United States Administrations will do to change regimes in other States, on the basis of various pretexts, lies and untruths.

Perhaps the representative of the United States could brief us on the current reports about the presence of a large number of biological military laboratories sponsored by his country in more than 20 States.

Mr. Hassan (Egypt): I have a few brief points to follow up on my previous intervention.

First, we have not yet heard about any opposition from any country in the region to the initiative in question.

Secondly, the initiative is simply a call for dialogue and negotiations, in which all issues can be discussed and negotiated on the basis of consensus.

Thirdly, it is an initiative put forward by the Group of Arab States. I think in the previous intervention of my colleague from the United States, he referred to it as an Egyptian initiative.

Finally, we strongly believe that the United Nations has a responsibility and a key role to play in that regard.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.