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Seventy-fifth session

First Committee

4th meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Santos Maraver(Spain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 94 to 110 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we begin, I would like to remind all delegations that the rolling list of speakers for this phase of our work will close this afternoon at 6 p.m. All delegations intending to take the floor should inscribe on the list before that deadline.

I would further remind delegations that I count on their cooperation in limiting statements to 10 minutes when speaking in their national capacity and 13 minutes when speaking on behalf of several delegations. To assist speakers in that regard, and with members' understanding, we will continue to use a timing mechanism whereby the red light on the speaker's microphone will begin to blink when the time limit has been reached. As necessary, I will remind speakers to conclude their statements in our collective interest. Those statements could include general views, specific issues of priority that require attention and the presentation of the proposals to be put forward. I encourage representatives with longer statements to deliver an abridged version and to provide the full text of their statements to be posted on the e-statement web portal. I would also encourage speakers to speak at a reasonable speed to allow for proper interpretation.

Once again, I would like to remind delegations that wish to make statements in person to send a copy of their statement to estatements@un.org, and those that

do not intend to make in-person statements and would instead like their statements to become part of the compendium are requested to send their statements to the First Committee email address.

Mr. Espinosa Cañizares (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to start my statement this morning by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, and all the members of the Bureau on your election. I would also like to acknowledge your actions and efforts to begin the First Committee's work amid the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. This global health crisis has a significant impact on international security, and the world needs all the main and subsidiary bodies of the United Nations to be working. All delegations should be committed to that end.

The delegation of Ecuador aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/75/PV.2). My country supports an international system based on rules and on the sovereign equality of States. We therefore advocate the participation of all delegations in the work of the Organization on an equal footing.

I also congratulate the Guatemalan diplomat Ms. María del Rosario Estrada Girón, from Latin America and the Caribbean, who honours us by serving as Rapporteur of the First Committee 74 years after the Ecuadorian diplomat Homero Viteri Lafronte, who in 1946 had the privilege of presenting for the consideration of the General Assembly the first resolution advocating

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the elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals (resolution 1 (I)).

As part of the first densely populated nuclear-weapon-free zone, established by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, Ecuador urges all States to work towards strengthening nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world, including the Middle East.

Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation must move forward in a simultaneous, interrelated and mutually reinforcing manner. Nuclear non-proliferation obligations are incumbent on all States. We regret the fact that we do not see the fulfilment of nuclear disarmament obligations by the nuclear-weapon States.

We pledge our commitment to, and support for, the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which had to be postponed to 2021, and whose fiftieth anniversary we had to mark online, including through the joint statement of 19 May 2020, initiated by Malaysia and put forward by 17 participating countries, among them Ecuador. However, I believe that the best way to celebrate 50 years of the Non-Proliferation Treaty is by achieving substantive results at the upcoming Review Conference.

Only two months ago, we commemorated 75 years since the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The best tribute that we, as States, can pay to the victims of those attacks is to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. That is why my country deposited its instrument of ratification on 25 September 2019.

Ecuador believes that changing the approach to security doctrines of the nuclear-weapon States and those involved in so-called nuclear protection is necessary for a peaceful world. The survival of our nations does not depend on how well-armed we are or how many nuclear warheads we think will protect us. The survival of our nations depends on how prepared we are to overcome the current challenges posed by a microscopic virus, such as COVID-19, and those viruses to come.

Today we call even more strongly for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and even more firmly condemn their use or threat of use, as well as their very existence, because they threaten the survival of humankind.

Ecuador once again expresses its complete rejection of any consideration, planning or development of nuclear tests. We reiterate our full support for the work of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), and we urge the international community to join efforts to achieve the early entry into force of that Treaty.

In that regard, I highlight the international panel and seminar on science and diplomacy that took place in Quito in September 2019, organized by Ecuador and the CTBTO Executive Secretariat. I am grateful for the support received on that occasion from its Executive Secretary, Mr. Lassina Zerbo, as well as for Ecuador's efforts against COVID-19 during 2020.

I wish to reiterate my country's commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Ecuador condemns the use of those weapons, which must be eliminated without further delay.

Ecuador shares and strongly supports the objectives of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects because such weapons affect the civilian population in and outside conflict situations, particularly women and girls, who are victims of the violence.

We are also a party to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

We are a party to, and advocate for the universalization of, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as they are as a weapon of particular cruelty and harmful effects that especially affect the most vulnerable groups. We therefore join countries that have called for a definitive halt to the financing of and investment in companies that produce cluster munitions.

I also reiterate Ecuador's commitment to the ongoing implementation of the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Ecuador has experience in that area and therefore decided to establish its borders with development projects instead of mines. The work with our neighbours in that area has been extremely significant.

We condemn the increasing use and refinement of unmanned aerial vehicles with artillery and lethal autonomous weapons. The militarization of artificial intelligence poses challenges for international security, transparency, control, proportionality and accountability.

With regard to outer space, Ecuador opposes its lawlessness and militarization, as well as its politicization. We support the exclusively peaceful use of that common heritage of humankind and reaffirm our conviction of the need for a legally binding instrument to safeguard it.

In conclusion, I would like to make a brief comment. Ecuador is a country of peace and, as such, supports efforts aimed at universal and complete disarmament. We advocate effective international security based on full respect for international law, human rights and the Charter of the United Nations, whose seventy-fifth anniversary of entry into force we will celebrate on 24 October. In the Charter, we, the peoples of the United Nations, committed ourselves to saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and, to that end, practising tolerance, living together in peace as good neighbours and joining forces for the maintenance of international peace and security. Multilateralism, not an arms race, is the only way to provide us with a democratic, secure, peaceful and more just world order.

Mr. Kelly (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (EU) (see A/C.1/75/PV.2) and that to be made by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition. A longer version of my statement will be submitted in writing.

Allow me first to add my congratulations to you, Sir, on assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee and to assure you of my delegation's full support to you and the members of the Bureau.

The year 2020 is one of anniversaries, some of which are a cause for celebration and others for solemn commemoration. We mark 75 years since the signing of the Charter of the United Nations, when nations across the world decided to make a commitment to working together for peace and to rebuilding from the terrible destruction of the Second World War. We also commemorate 75 years since the world witnessed the first use of nuclear weapons, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

(NPT), and my country, Ireland, is proud of its own distinct contribution to its creation. We also celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the tenth anniversary of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The year 2020 has also been a challenging one. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has claimed lives the world over, drastically changing how we live and work and adding a further dimension to many of the complex issues that we deal with in the First Committee. Biosecurity issues take on new importance, thereby underscoring the need to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We have seen reprehensible cyberattacks and hacks against medical and health-care facilities and other critical infrastructure during the pandemic, further highlighting our need for cyberresilience. Many international disarmament and arms control agreements are unravelling or being undermined. Global and regional geopolitical tensions are rising. The prospect of a new arms race is very real. Costly nuclear modernization programmes are absorbing vast resources. The threat of proliferation remains. The Doomsday Clock is at its most alarming setting — 100 seconds to midnight.

In that context, international disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control agreements assume added significance. The NPT has remained the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture over the past 50 years. The unavoidable postponement of the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT offers the opportunity to use the additional time to better prepare. A key priority for Ireland will be ensuring tangible progress across all three pillars, with a particular focus on areas where progress has been slowest, namely, disarmament and the implementation of past commitments.

The COVID-19 pandemic is an urgent reminder of the importance of international cooperation to avoid global catastrophes, including the unthinkable and unacceptable humanitarian consequences of a nuclear-weapon explosion, whether deliberately, by accident or miscalculation. The global pandemic has also shown us that the arsenals of nuclear weapons afford us no security or safety and that we are completely ill-equipped to respond to such a catastrophic event. The only guaranteed protection from that risk is the elimination of nuclear weapons.

I am proud that Ireland ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) earlier this year, on Hiroshima Day. Ireland takes the view that the TPNW is fully compatible with the NPT and provides a legal pathway for States to fulfil their obligations under article VI of the NPT. The Treaty requires just four more ratifications to enter into force. We encourage States that have not yet joined the Treaty to do so, and we look forward to the Treaty's entry into force.

It is deeply regrettable that, after 24 years, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has still not entered into force. Ireland calls individually on each of the eight States that have not yet done so to sign and/or ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as soon as possible. Furthermore, all States should abide by the moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosion and refrain from any action or rhetoric contrary to the object and purpose of the Treaty.

Ireland welcomes the talks between the United States and Russia on strategic arms control and hopes that they can lead to an agreement on the extension of the New START Treaty as a matter of urgency and a future agreement as soon as possible.

Like its EU partners, Ireland views the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as a major achievement of multilateral diplomacy, an important contribution to nuclear non-proliferation and a cornerstone of international efforts to support peace, security and economic development in the region. Ireland regrets the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA and subsequent steps taken by the United States that run contrary to the agreement. We are gravely concerned by Iran's breaches of the JCPOA and urgently call on Iran to return to full compliance with its terms. Ireland welcomes the agreement reached by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Iran to facilitate the full implementation of Iran's safeguards obligations and is encouraged by the swift start to implementing that agreement. We continue to call on Iran to provide full and timely access to the IAEA inspectors and extend full cooperation to the IAEA in clarifying any outstanding safeguards questions that the Agency may have.

The ongoing nuclear and ballistic-missile-related activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea represent a serious threat to international peace and security. Ireland urges the Democratic People's

Republic of Korea to fully dismantle its nuclear programme in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and demonstrate good faith by immediately signing and ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), returning to compliance with its obligations under the NPT and cooperating fully with the IAEA.

The use of a chemical weapon against Alexei Navalny adds to a worrying trend of recent years that threatens the global norm of the non-use of chemical weapons. The ban on the use of chemical weapons under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is absolute and total, and Ireland condemns in the strongest terms any and all use of chemical weapons. The international community must redouble its efforts to prevent impunity; the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is crucial in that regard. Its diligence, professionalism and impartiality while addressing the use of chemical weapons — including through the Investigation and Identification Team — offer a vital first step towards accountability and an end to impunity. I call on all States to uphold the integrity of the CWC and cooperate fully with the OPCW.

Conflicts around the world have become increasingly urbanized, and civilians continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts. Addressing the catastrophic effects of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas remains a priority for Ireland. Ireland is leading work on the elaboration of a political declaration, as outlined in Action 14 of the Secretary-General's *Securing our Common Future — An Agenda for Disarmament*. Following consultations in Geneva, which heard interventions from Member States, the United Nations system, the International Committee of the Red Cross and civil society, a draft political declaration has been prepared. While face-to-face work to conclude the declaration has been interrupted by the pandemic, efforts continue to maintain momentum with a view to holding final consultations as soon as possible. We are encouraged by the level of cross-regional support for the political declaration process, the international and regional efforts to enhance the protection of civilians, and efforts to address the impacts on civilians caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

The fast-paced nature of technological advancements raises a number of difficult legal, political, military and ethical questions. It is our view that working to achieve consensus within the United Nations system remains the

most effective way to address the emerging challenges posed by lethal autonomous weapons systems. It is crucial, therefore, that those countries most likely to develop those new weapon systems meaningfully engage as we work towards the development of a normative framework. We will continue to work within the Group of Governmental Experts as we address the considerable ethical, moral and legal dilemmas posed by those weapons.

As we mark the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), I reiterate that gender equality has long been a priority for Ireland in disarmament and non-proliferation. Ireland will continue to champion the meaningful and equal participation of women and men, and the integration of substantive gender perspectives in all areas of the work of the Committee.

I would like to congratulate the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on its fortieth anniversary and commend it for its research on disarmament and international security, and we are pleased to support its important work.

Finally, I salute the contribution of civil society to our work and welcome all efforts to ensure its inclusion in our modified working methods.

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): I congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the members of the bureau on having assumed the leadership of the Committee and assure you of my delegation's support for its work despite the challenging circumstances we are facing.

Armenia reaffirms its strong commitment to the full and universal implementation of the international obligations in the areas of non-proliferation, disarmament, conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures. We reiterate the principle of the indivisibility of international security, which implies the understanding that each and every country shares a responsibility to guarantee peace and security for all.

Amid the unprecedented challenges caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the international community must stand united to uphold the inviolability of the arms-control regime. The tendencies of radicalism and extremism and the continued rise of hate speech have been increasingly infusing the international security agenda, distorting the global discourse and fostering social and political

divides. Attempts to alter military balance and the resort to force in pursuing domestic and foreign policy goals must be resolutely rejected and condemned at all levels. More often than not, reliance on the use or threat of force in conflict resolution reflects a lack of political will and genuine commitment to peace. The ongoing situation in Nagorno Karabakh is illustrative in that regard.

On 27 September, Azerbaijan unleashed a large-scale military offensive along the entire line of contact with Nagorno Karabakh, in violation of the trilateral ceasefire agreements of 1994 and 1995, the norms of international law and the principles of humanity. The offensive against the people of Nagorno Karabakh was perpetrated with the direct military involvement of Turkey and Turkish-backed foreign terrorist fighters, causing the most dangerous escalation in the region since the early 1990s.

The scope and the character of the large-scale offensive indicate its pre-planned nature, with a pre-existing concentration of hundreds of units of battle tanks, heavy artillery and multiple launch rocket systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). As part of its military preparations for the aggression, weeks before the actual attack Azerbaijan closed down air traffic, carried out a draft of the military reserve force and confiscated civilian trucks for military needs. On 25 September, two days prior to the attack, the Ministry of Defence of Azerbaijan rejected the request of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) observers to conduct monitoring along the line of contact.

Azerbaijan has never made a secret of its strategic goal of resorting to military force in trying to resolve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijan's well-established record of non-compliance with treaties and regimes in the area of conventional arms control, unnotified large-scale military exercises, an unabated and destabilizing military build-up and a consistent refusal to implement confidence- and security-building measures in the framework of regional organizations represented clear early-warning signs of pre-planned military aggression.

Launched under the cover of the unprecedented global pandemic, Azerbaijan's large-scale military offensive has been inflicting heavy human losses and massive damage on civilian settlements and critical civilian infrastructure, including health-

care institutions and schools. Azerbaijan's failure to explicitly support the Secretary-General's appeal for an immediate global ceasefire serves as yet another obvious indication of its well-nurtured plans to launch military actions while the international community is focused on efforts to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is no shortage of credible, well-documented evidence regarding the direct involvement of Turkey in the conflict. The large-scale Azerbaijan-Turkey joint military exercises held in July and August served as a disguise for the deployment of Turkish military personnel and equipment, which included F-16 fighter jets. Supported by the Turkish air force, instructors and UAVs, Azerbaijan attempted to expand the geography of hostilities to the territory of Armenia. After repeatedly denying the factual evidence, Azerbaijan has finally acknowledged the presence of the Turkish air forces on their territory.

The recruiting and transport of foreign terrorist fighters and their use in the large-scale offensive against the people of Artsakh has been well established and documented, and there is mounting evidence of extensive involvement on the part of Turkish-backed mercenaries and foreign terrorist fighters in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict zone.

The political leadership of Azerbaijan bears full responsibility for its criminal actions, war crimes and other gross violations of international humanitarian law. Massive airborne and land attacks have been targeting civilians, journalists, hospitals, schools and other vital infrastructure, with extensive use of military aviation, multiple launch rocket systems and even banned weaponry such as cluster bombs.

The crisis response experts from Amnesty International have identified cluster munitions in the residential areas of Nagorno Karabakh's capital, Stepanakert, which were fired by the Azerbaijani armed forces. On 8 October the Azerbaijani military deliberately targeted the Holy Savior Cathedral of Shushi, replicating the style of the international terrorists who were destroying the heritage of ethnic and religious groups in the Middle East a few years ago.

The international community, including the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs and the United Nations Secretary-General, have called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to negotiations without preconditions. The OSCE Minsk Group

co-Chair countries — the Russian Federation, the United States and France — in their respective statements have condemned any involvement of external parties in escalating the violence. Calls for an immediate ceasefire and the resumption of dialogue were also made by many other countries and international organizations.

Despite all those appeals, Azerbaijan and its enabler country has continued to perpetrate hostilities against Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia. On 10 October, a joint statement by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan was adopted in which the sides agreed to declare a cessation of hostilities, for humanitarian purposes, for the exchange of prisoners of war and the bodies of those killed, with the mediation and in accordance with the criteria of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

However, breaking its own commitment, the Azerbaijani side continued military hostilities in different directions from the front line and attacked the capital city of Stepanakert, Martuni and other towns of Nagorno Karabakh, as well as settlements in the border territories of Armenia. An Azerbaijani subversive group penetrated Hadrut city, in Artsakh, and committed atrocity crimes, killing five people, including a woman and a disabled person.

We strongly condemn the steps taken by Azerbaijan to undermine the agreement reached. Turkey's aspirations to project violence and instability into our region and turn it into a platform for its expansionist ambitions by way of supporting Azerbaijan and supplying it with foreign terrorist fighters, military equipment and experts is evidenced also in its sponsoring of information and a political campaign aimed at undermining the provisions of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Those actions pose a serious threat to international peace and security and, as such, require an adequate response from the international community.

We are convinced that peace and security at the global level stem directly from conditions of stability at the regional and subregional levels. All attempts to use force as a method of conflict resolution, to use prohibited weapons in warfare and to sponsor international terrorism to project influence into neighbouring regions should be resolutely and unequivocally condemned.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Armenia's resolve to contribute to upholding international peace

and security and advancing global cooperation under the disarmament agenda.

Mr. Marschik (Austria): Since this is the first time that I am taking the floor in the First Committee, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the members of the Bureau on your election and to wish you much success. You can rely on Austria's full support.

Austria aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2) and offers the following remarks in its national capacity.

We say that everything is different this year owing to the pandemic, and yet after listening to the last few speakers I feel that here in the First Committee everything does seem slightly familiar. When I look at the agenda for this year's session compared to that of 20 years ago, when I first came here, not everything has changed.

What is certainly true is that the global crisis caused by the coronavirus disease has not spared the United Nations disarmament machinery, and I commend the Secretariat for its work in these difficult times. But equally clear is that we already had major concerns: the erosion of the international security architecture, the modernization of weapons arsenals, the adaptation of emerging new technologies for application in warfare, and, not surprisingly, related to all that, in 2019 the largest increase in military expenditures in a decade — money that is now lacking now to fight the pandemic and its socioeconomic effects.

Nowhere are these trends more visible than in the field of nuclear weapons, and nowhere are they more urgent. Seventy-five years after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear-armed States continue to disregard their disarmament obligations and even develop new warheads and new missiles, including some that were outlawed under the now-defunct Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action hangs by a thread, and we urge Iran to return to compliance, while we regret the United States' withdrawal. The postponement of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should not prevent that key conference from being held in full format. We stand ready to contribute to a successful outcome of the Conference in all three pillars and achieve progress on the long-overdue implementation of article VI, building on past commitments, in particular the 2010 action plan for

nuclear disarmament. Ten years on, we are still waiting for real action on the action plan.

Similarly, yet another year has passed without the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty's long-overdue entry into force. It is time for the annex 2 States to join the Treaty and support the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and its International Monitoring System. Its role could be key in the urgently needed denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Not everything is bad, however. We must point out some positive developments that occurred over the past year as well. We welcome the strategic stability talks between the United States and Russia in Vienna and Helsinki. We hope that they will lead to the extension of the New START Treaty as well as to negotiations on a more ambitious and inclusive successor agreement.

A sign of concrete progress is the steady increase in the number of signatures and ratifications of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which continues despite the pandemic. By signing and ratifying the Treaty, States send a clear message that nuclear weapons represent an existential threat to humankind and that only their total elimination brings security. We know by now that there is no alternative if we wish to prevent the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any nuclear explosion, be it intentional, by accident or as a product of miscalculation. The TPNW strengthens the NPT and the norm against the use of nuclear weapons. The Secretary-General rightly calls the treaty a further pillar of the disarmament regime. We call on all States to further strengthen that pillar by joining the 84 signatories and 46 States parties. We are very confident that the entry into force is imminent, and Austria looks forward to the first Meeting of States Parties at the United Nations in Vienna.

At this point, I want to take this opportunity to present the draft resolutions entitled "Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons" (A/C.1/75/L.5) and "Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons" (A/C.1/75/L.6), submitted by Brazil, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand and my own country, Austria. Both drafts represent technical updates from last year. We kindly invite all States to co-sponsor and support both draft resolutions.

Austria's work in the field of disarmament has been guided by humanitarian concerns for decades.

Another example, in addition to our efforts in the area of nuclear weapons, are our activities regarding the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. We note with satisfaction that the momentum generated at the Vienna Conference on Protecting Civilians in Urban Warfare last October continued during the consultations on a political declaration in Geneva, led very ably by colleagues from Ireland, and we look forward to their conclusion and a strong declaration, which will strengthen compliance with international humanitarian law and prevent human suffering. Liberating the world from the scourge of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions remains a priority for my country, guided by the same humanitarian motivation. We are concerned about recent reports concerning the use of cluster bombs in ongoing conflicts.

We have also seen worrying pictures of new long-range missiles. As the Executive Secretariat of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, we will continue to advocate for joining this useful transparency and confidence-building instrument, which now counts 143 subscribing States. Austria will soon assume the Chairmanship of the Missile Technology Control Regime and will work actively to control the proliferation of missiles in a cooperative spirit. We thank our predecessor, New Zealand, for its excellent work.

More work is also required to ensure that the exploration and use of outer space as a global common good remains peaceful and is conducted for the benefit of all. Any militarization of outer space would have a negative impact on a fragile security environment, further increasing the risks of escalation and miscalculation. We remain committed to preventing an arms race in outer space.

I would be remiss not to mention our unwavering support for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the essential work carried out by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The use of biological or chemical weapons by anyone, at any time and under any circumstances is completely unacceptable. As recent events have unfortunately shown, that simple message needs to be repeated as long as those weapons exist. Anyone violating those essential norms needs to be held accountable, which is why Austria is a member of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

The coronavirus-disease pandemic has altered our daily lives in several ways; one of the most noticeable for all of us was the dramatically increased reliance on technology. In times of virtual meetings, the importance of a free, open, stable and secure cyberspace is greater than ever before. We therefore welcome the excellent work carried out by the Open-ended Working Group on cybersecurity to further broaden areas of convergence, based on the outcomes of consensus reports by groups of governmental experts, in order to lead us to a successful conclusion of that process, while also laying the groundwork for possible future institutional arrangements.

As we know, advances in technology and artificial intelligence extend not only to our homes but also to their application in weapons systems, with potentially unacceptable consequences. We cannot allow lethal autonomous weapon systems to be developed and deployed in armed conflicts, using lethal force without human control over critical functions. That would fundamentally undermine international humanitarian law and our ethical standards.

We concur with the Secretary-General's assessment that such a scenario would be politically unacceptable and morally repugnant. The time to prevent that through a legally binding norm is now. To address the issue of such weapons in more detail, Austria will organize an international conference in 2021, and we invite all members of the Committee to participate, hopefully in a physical form.

In these extraordinary times, we need extraordinary cooperation to tackle the challenges before us and show the world that multilateralism works. This year's First Committee session provides an excellent opportunity to do just that, and we look forward to doing our part and engaging actively and constructively.

I would like to thank colleagues here in the Secretariat and in organizations around the world, as well as friends and colleagues in think tanks and civil society, for their hard work.

Mr. Al-Dobhany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to congratulate you, Sir, upon your election as Chair of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session. We believe that your competence and efficient ability will guide the work of the Committee to reach the desired outcome. We also emphasize to you our full cooperation and

support with a view to a successful session that is convened amid exceptional circumstances this year.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

The Republic of Yemen reiterates its commitment to the principles and objectives of disarmament, international security and nuclear non-proliferation. The possession and development of nuclear weapons constitute a threat to regional and international peace and security. For that reason, my country supports all initiatives to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons and establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in the Middle East region, which is experiencing instability in the security situation due to imbalance of power among its various parties and nuclear activities that are not under the control of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Whereas all Arab States have acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and stressed their readiness to take measures for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, Israel still refuses to accede to the NPT and refuses to subject all of its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime. Israel has also rejected all international initiatives for achieving the universality of the NPT and nuclear disarmament in the Middle East. That perpetuates a situation of instability and an arms race in the region.

In that regard, my country welcomes the success of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in November 2019 under the presidency of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, pursuant to decision 73/546. My country hopes that all countries concerned will actively participate in the Conference in order to reach a binding treaty that promotes stability, security and peace in the region and the world.

This session coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the NPT and the twenty-fifth anniversary of its open-ended extension. That ensures the importance of the continuation of the Treaty and the implementation of its commitments. In

that regard, we hope that all parties will contribute to ensuring the success of the 2020 Review Conference in order to establish a comprehensive and balanced outcome document that includes clear measures for promoting the efficacy and universality of the Treaty by implementing agreed commitments, particularly those regarding the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

As the present session is convened, my country has been suffering from an armed conflict raging for more than five years due to a coup d'état by the Houthi militias. They are supported financially, militarily and logistically by Iran, including through ballistic missiles, drones and land and marine mines. Those weapons do not only kill Yemeni people but also threaten neighbouring countries as well as the security and stability regionally and worldwide.

Yemen ratified the Ottawa Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in 1997. As Yemen has eliminated its stock of this cursed weapon, the Houthi death militias have made and laid nearly 2 million landmines and improvised explosive devices in many parts of Yemen under their control. That has resulted in killing and injuring thousands of victims, especially children and women. Those weapons have paralysed the movement of the Yemeni people, notwithstanding mine-clearance efforts undertaken by the national army and the Saudi Project for Landmine Clearance. We hope that the international community will bring pressure to bear on those militias and the State that provides them with these weapons and missiles so as to be committed to international law and resolutions and stop laying mines and launching missiles. We also call upon the international community and relevant organizations to support the efforts of the Yemeni Government to eliminate such mines, undertake rehabilitation and awareness vis-a-vis their threats as well as the means of addressing them.

Turning to small arms and light weapons, my country reaffirms the need to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. There has been a continuous increase in the number of weapons provided for the armed militias and terrorist groups, which has prolonged and fuelled the war while diminishing the chances of achieving peace, security and stability in Yemen and the region.

In conclusion, we hope that the proceedings of this important session will be successful and emphasize that we will continue our cooperation to achieve the common goals and objectives for a world of peace and security.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session. We are sure that you have the ability to make the work of this Committee successful. I would also like to thank your predecessor, His Excellency the Permanent Representative of Bolivia, for his efforts in managing the Committee's work at the seventy-fourth session.

My Country's delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stresses the importance of efforts that aim to eliminate nuclear weapons, especially in the Middle East. Security and stability in any region cannot be achieved through the possession of weapons of mass destruction — but only through cooperation and consultation among countries and efforts to achieve development and progress by avoiding an arms race towards possessing this kind of weapon that leads to the destruction of humankind.

In that regard, my country affirms that the resolution on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains valid until its objectives and aims are achieved — otherwise, the Arab States would not have agreed on the open-ended extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Whereas the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is keen to achieve the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations in maintaining the security and safety of peoples across the world, it has been at the forefront of the countries that support the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

We regret that international and regional efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East have been met with insurmountable obstacles despite the international consensus and regional determination to make the region free of nuclear weapons. We recall that the NPT Review Conferences have requested that Israel, the sole State in the Middle East which remains

outside of the Treaty, promptly accede to it and subject all its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards regime, for the sake of maintaining peace and stability and achieving security for all the peoples of the region.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia wishes to thank the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for ably presiding over the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. We look forward to supporting sisterly Kuwait's presidency of the second session of the Conference.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomed the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 group, based on our conviction on the need to contain the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, both in the Middle East and throughout the world. However, we are extremely concerned by Iran's failure to comply with its nuclear-related commitments. The IAEA recently reported that Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium currently exceeds the permitted limit tenfold as per the international agreement. Iran's escalating non-compliance has been reflected in a number of previous reports issued by the Director-General of the IAEA.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stresses the importance of establishing an international comprehensive agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme that guarantees Iran's non-acquisition of nuclear weapons and addresses its destabilizing actions in the region and throughout the world, as well as sponsoring terrorism. Such an agreement would prevent Iran from undertaking any future acts of provocation and lead to its reintegration into the international community and the lifting of all sanctions against it for the sake and welfare of the Iranian people.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia emphasizes the inherent right of all States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, in keeping with IAEA criteria and under its supervision. We also support facilitating the transfer of technology, expertise and equipment pertaining to the acquisition of nuclear energy for peaceful uses. We urge developed countries to cooperate in order to remove obstacles that hinder the transfer of such technologies to developing countries.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia underscores the extreme importance of implementing the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its

Aspects with a view to addressing the phenomenon of providing weapons to terrorists and illegitimate armed groups. In that regard, my country calls upon the international community to firmly stand against Iranian actions in providing terrorist militias with weapons, including providing logistical support to militias in Yemen, Lebanon and others in the Middle East, in gross violation of all international resolutions in that regard, including Security Council resolution 2231 (2015).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia underscores the importance of the peaceful uses of outer space. Relevant international legal agreements have played a positive role in promoting the peaceful use of outer space and organizing activities in it bearing in mind that outer space is a public domain that belongs to all humankind. Ongoing efforts to control outer space should not hinder the inherent right of all countries to the peaceful use of outer space.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia underlines the importance of international and multilateral cooperation to bolster information security and safeguard national interests on the worldwide web.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shares the international community's concern and desire for a successful tenth NPT Review Conference, to be held in January 2021. We will fully cooperate to ensure the success of the Conference, while also fully supporting the President of the Conference with a view to the adoption of an outcome document that reflects the aspirations of all countries in order to achieve a world free of the risks and threats of nuclear weapons in which all peoples can enjoy tranquillity, stability and peace.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes that the international community is capable of reaching radical solutions to all the problems that have prevented the First Committee from resolving numerous issues before it.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the members of the Bureau on your election to head this important Committee and to assure you of the full support of the Swiss delegation.

On the occasion of the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, we reaffirmed our collective commitment to multilateralism. The United Nations has established a

global framework to promote international peace, foster cooperation and achieve prosperity. The rules-based order and the Charter of the United Nations prohibition of the use of force in international relations have saved countless lives. The arms control and disarmament machinery of the United Nations is central to that effort.

As we begin this session of the First Committee, we are confronted with disturbing trends. The strategic environment is deteriorating, global military competition is intensifying and essential achievements in the field of arms control are being challenged. Recent developments call into question the maintenance of the nuclear agreement with Iran. The end of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny in Russia with a nerve agent considered to be a use of chemical weapons are examples that underline the vulnerability of international norms and agreements.

The deterioration of international security is exacerbated by a pandemic whose global consequences remind us of the fragility of our planet and its inhabitants. Recent months have shown that no single country can overcome alone the global challenges we face. There is no alternative to effective multilateral cooperation, to taking every opportunity to strengthen the arms control and disarmament system and to ensuring its long-term resilience. In that regard, I have five points to make.

My first point concerns the risk posed by nuclear weapons. We call on all nuclear-weapon-possessing States to opt for dialogue and cooperation and to refrain from any action that could lead to nuclear escalation. We call on the Russian Federation and the United States to extend the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms without delay. Once this urgent step has been taken, new treaties should be negotiated to achieve further reductions, progressively including other nuclear-weapon States and encompassing the different categories of nuclear and strategic weapons. Renewed efforts are also needed for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to finally enter into force.

We encourage all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to use the additional time available until the tenth Review Conference to undertake thorough preparatory work where possible. One of Switzerland's objectives will be to help give new impetus to the implementation of the NPT by building on existing commitments. Another of

its priorities will be the adoption of a work programme for nuclear-risk reduction.

My second point concerns the risks and opportunities resulting from new technologies. Various arms control processes are now addressing this issue, drawing on the disarmament-for-future-generations pillar of the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda. We must strive to reconcile the many opportunities offered by emerging technologies with the potential risk.

The Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems is carrying out essential work, seeking to establish an operational and normative framework applicable to these weapons, guided by the requirement to respect international humanitarian law. The Group of Governmental Experts should work towards a shared understanding on how to ensure necessary human control over autonomous weapons systems. In addition, the development of new hypersonic weapons systems can alter the strategic balance and increase the risk of misinterpretation or miscalculation in crisis situations. Similarly, the military use of artificial intelligence — for example, in the area of command and control — has as-yet-unknown ramifications for the conduct of military operations, and therefore potentially for regional and global stability.

Another challenge in the field of science and technology is the rapid progress in the life sciences, in particular the convergence between chemical and biological sciences. We need to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention in order to be ready for a world in which biological weapons may be easier to develop and possible attacks more accurate and more difficult to attribute.

A third point I would like to raise is the proliferation of means of delivery, in particular ballistic missiles. We are concerned about the proliferation and increasing sophistication of missile technologies in various regions of the world. Some of these developments constitute a challenge for international security and stability. Pending legally binding norms in the field of ballistic missiles, The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation is the main instrument for addressing the destabilizing effects of ballistic-missile proliferation. As this year's Chair of the Code of Conduct, Switzerland will submit a draft resolution

on the Code and aims to increase its visibility and the number of States subscribing to it.

Security in outer space is closely linked to the issue of missile proliferation and is increasingly under threat. While we saw significant progress in 2019 at the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, multilateral cooperation in relation to the security aspect of space has not seen such progress. Such recent developments in this area as the enhancement and testing of anti-satellite capabilities on the ground and in orbit threaten security in outer space. We hope that new approaches can help advance the development of international standards. In that regard, we consider the new draft resolution (A/C.1/75/L.45/Rev.1) on reducing space threats through responsible behaviour, submitted by the United Kingdom, as a constructive step forward.

My fourth point concerns conventional weapons, which continue to cause heavy casualties worldwide. Contemporary conflicts increasingly take place in urban settings, with a devastating impact on civilians. In that context, we are grateful to Ireland for initiating the development of a political declaration on strengthening the protection of civilians from harm resulting from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. We hope that the circumstances will soon be right to finalize work on such a declaration.

Switzerland is presiding over the second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). We are striving to make the Review Conference as inclusive and productive as possible in order to achieve an outcome that can contribute to further protecting civilians and cluster-munition victims, facilitating development and promoting the universalization of the Convention. In the context of presiding over the Review Conference, Switzerland is deeply concerned about the alleged use of cluster munitions in the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh. We call on all States and parties to any conflict to respect international humanitarian law and refrain from using these indiscriminate weapons. We hope that those States that have not yet done so will join the CCM and that the draft resolution (A/C.1/75/L.29) on the Convention will receive the widest possible support.

The excessive accumulation of conventional ammunition remains a challenge that has not yet been adequately addressed at the international level. In response, we support the implementation of the relevant action in the Secretary-General's agenda. We are also

participating in the Group of Governmental Experts on Ammunition, which had been making progress towards a substantive report despite difficult circumstances this year. We remain determined to build on this solid foundation and to complete the Group's work next year.

Finally, let me make a few remarks on cyberspace. The pandemic has revealed our growing dependence on information and communications technologies. It is in our common interest that cyberspace be governed by law and used peacefully. Our main priority should therefore be to ensure that existing international law rules and voluntary standards are applied and respected in cyberspace. In that context, both the Open-ended Working Group and the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security can contribute to ensuring a free cyberspace.

Before concluding, let me congratulate the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, which is celebrating its fortieth anniversary this year, after a major metamorphosis in terms of activity and increased visibility.

The current difficult situation forces us to rethink international security and disarmament. We need a new willingness to compromise to overcome those divisions. This Committee must leave polarization behind and give positive impetus in that direction.

Mr. Izquierdo Ortiz de Zárate (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by greeting you, Mr. Chair, on the occasion of the National Day of Spain and, together with the rest of the Bureau, on your election to lead the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly.

Spain aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union earlier in the general debate of the Committee (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

As Secretary-General Guterres pointed out before the General Assembly a few days ago, we are facing a foundational moment (see A/75/PV.4). The pandemic's serious consequences for the entire planet, further coinciding with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, place us before the pressing need to address this global challenge with responsibility and boldness.

International security, the primary objective of the Organization according to Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, and the focus of the work of the First

Committee, is subject to what is probably the greatest number of points of tension seen in recent decades. The responsibility of all of us to constructively address those threats is therefore even greater than ever, and we must take every opportunity to strengthen and broaden the multilateral instruments that for 75 years have served to resolve those differences.

The Secretary-General's disarmament agenda is a prime example of the high importance he attaches to this area in the global agenda. The interrelationship among non-proliferation, disarmament and the Sustainable Development Goals is particularly noteworthy, and we agree with the cross-cutting approach being taken to these issues. For Spain, it is also crucial to work for a greater role for women and gender equality in all spheres.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and Spain continues to believe in its full validity and enormous potential following 50 years of it playing a crucial role in international peace, stability and security. The NPT Review Conference to be held in 2021 should serve to increase the strengthening of its three pillars jointly and consensually.

Spain subscribes to the principle of irreversibility underlying the commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in accordance with article VI of the NPT, considering it as an international legal obligation. The current international security context, with its complex tensions and conditions, is no excuse for avoiding the obligation of universal, irreversible and sustained nuclear disarmament. For this reason, we must continue to work on measures that will lead to real progress. That is why Spain is a member of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, which establishes concrete, tangible and realistic steps towards further disarmament.

Spain stresses the importance of, and the need for, the entry into force as soon as possible of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CBTB), while recognizing the important contribution of the CBTB organization to global peace and stability. We would also like to make reference to the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction held last November. To the relevance of the holding of the Conference should be added the willingness to

involve all parties in its development of such a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

We attach great importance to maintaining the architecture of disarmament and arms control commitments and treaties that have guaranteed a sustained period of peace and stability. It is always crucial to ensure the continued existence of an adequate international legal framework for effective arms control. We therefore call for the maintenance of the various existing multilateral and bilateral treaties, while making sure that those instruments keep pace with the times, including new technologies and all actors concerned.

The possibility of terrorist groups and other non-State actors acquiring nuclear weapons or radioactive material is a threat that we must continue to fight. We stress the importance of the International Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and Nuclear Facilities, the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and Security Council resolutions 1540 (2004) and 2325 (2016).

Spain underlines its support for, and commitment to, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), unanimously endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2231 (2015). We understand that the agreement remains a key element in the international non-proliferation architecture and an example of what multilateral diplomacy can achieve. We therefore regret the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA. We would also like to recall that the trust of the international community is closely linked to Iran's strict compliance with the agreement.

The North Korean issue remains a source of concern and a challenge to the shared goal of global stability. It remains imperative that North Korea comply with all Security Council resolutions, definitively cease nuclear testing and implement its Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, as it advances on its path towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has done a great deal of transparent and professional work since its establishment until now, and we are fully convinced of the high level of competence and rigour it has brought to its work, to which we want to make our own contribution during our term on the OPCW Executive Council.

We are increasingly alarmed by the growing number of cases of the use of chemical weapons in different scenarios. The repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria is one of the greatest violations of humanitarian law of our time. Spain reiterates its strongest condemnation of any use of these prohibited weapons, whoever the perpetrator and whatever the context or motivation. The international community must react firmly and decisively against the use of these weapons and stand against impunity. Spain has participated in all initiatives in that regard. We were among the founders of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons in 2018 and supported the creation of the Secretary-General's accountability mechanism.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has once again highlighted the urgent need for a legally binding verification protocol for the proper implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The postponement of the Conference of States Parties gives us room to reconsider the strengthening of the Convention in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Turning to conventional weapons, the increasing proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a growing threat to peace and stability and progress, with devastating effects on societies where this phenomenon is most virulent. The sheer number of victims of these weapons makes them true weapons of mass destruction. The interaction among armed violence caused by a general presence of these weapons, organized crime and the lack of development has been fully demonstrated. We hope that the seventh Biennial Meeting of States, to take place in 2021, will serve to advance global action against this phenomenon.

In relation to lethal autonomous weapons systems, we continue to propose establishing a code of conduct that would include transparency measures, confidence-building, information-sharing and best practices, with possible developments related to artificial intelligence. We would also like to mention the Convention on Anti-Personnel Mines and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Spanish legislation establishes a common treatment regime with reference to these Conventions and all weapons that cause unacceptable inhumane suffering. Spain has also contributed to the development of the pilot project of the Counter- Improvised-Explosive-Device Capability Maturity Model and Self-Assessment

Tool, developed by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

The Arms Trade Treaty is a key instrument designed to promote transparency and accountability in preventing illicit trafficking in weapons, making a clear contribution to international peace and security and to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 16.4. We must intensify efforts aimed at reaching its universalization and support States through the Arms Trade Treaty Voluntary Trust Fund to develop more legal and institutional frameworks so as to facilitate national implementation of the Treaty and further address the problems of the diversion of arms.

Cybersecurity is a growing focus of our work, and we must build on the significant progress made by the Open-ended Working Group and the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security. The development of a programme of action to advance responsible State behaviour in cyberspace would be an important step in the right direction. Likewise, we continue to consider it a priority to address as a matter of urgency the increase in the number of malicious and unlawful incidents in cyberspace.

Spain promotes a safe and sustainable outer space and advocates its peaceful use as a common good for all humankind, to be used for the benefit of everyone through responsible behaviour in the face of the threats that worry us. We underline the importance of the development of confidence-building measures, transparency in outer space activities and our commitment to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We are therefore concerned about the increasing development of anti-satellite weapons, including ground-based weapons, and underline the importance of expeditiously addressing these issues as part of the international effort to prevent such an arms race. We also urge all States to refrain from destroying objects in outer space, since that could cause debris hazardous to the safety of space activities.

Finally, I would like to turn to the disarmament machinery, which has been suffering for years from a paralysis that risks becoming structural. Spain believes that we should not abandon the existing institutional structure, but rather that we should make every effort to revitalize it, with achieving universality as the ideal goal of those efforts. We urge the Conference on

Disarmament to overcome its differences and establish a programme of work based on dialogue and trust, which will therefore enable a swift return to negotiation, which is its main task.

I conclude by expressing our hope that the First Committee will generate an open debate that will bring positions closer together and establish greater trust among all of us.

Mr. Mimouni (Algeria): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Agustín Santos Maraver, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. My congratulations also go out to the other members of the Bureau. I wish you every success in that endeavour and assure you of Algeria's full cooperation and support.

As we embark upon a unique and unprecedented session that marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of our Organization, nuclear weapons continue to pose serious and enduring threats to humankind. Indeed, nuclear disarmament is at a crossroads. There is growing distrust and renewed competition among nuclear-weapon States. The disarmament and non-proliferation regime is eroding. Divisions are growing over how to achieve our shared vision of a world free of nuclear weapons. This session is therefore of particular importance and should provide an opportunity to renew and redouble our efforts to overcome those growing challenges.

As a State party to the main treaty related to weapons of mass destruction, Algeria remains strongly convinced that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We share the concerns of other non-nuclear-weapon States about the limited progress made in meeting the nuclear disarmament obligations and regarding improvements to, and the development of, existing nuclear weapons, which are no less than a violation of the legal obligations on nuclear disarmament.

In that respect and based on its long-standing principled position regarding the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Algeria will remain among the States that call for its full and urgent implementation as the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, as well as the full, non-discriminatory and balanced implementation of its three pillars. We also reiterate our call upon the nuclear-weapon States to the NPT to fulfil their Treaty obligations and urge all parties that have not done so to join the Treaty without conditions.

The celebration this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the NPT's entry into force and the twenty-fifth anniversary of its indefinite extension must be observed as a timely and symbolic opportunity for the States parties to undertake a comprehensive review and assessment of the current status of the Treaty, the implementation of the previous obligation and commitments within its framework and the challenges facing its full implementation.

It is from that perspective that Algeria, along with 16 like-minded States, issued a joint communiqué in May 2020 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the NPT and renew our collective endeavour. As we look forward to the tenth NPT Review Conference, Algeria calls on all States to work towards preserving the credibility and sustainability of the Treaty and achieving its universality and objectives through the adoption of a balanced and comprehensive outcome document.

Delegitimizing nuclear weapons is a necessary step to forestall the world from their danger. And it is evidently why my country joined that path and conscientiously supported the process of their prohibition. In that regard, Algeria was among the first signatories to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which constitutes an essential contribution to nuclear disarmament. As stated by my Minister during the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, Algeria intends to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in the very near future.

Algeria continues to suffer from the catastrophic consequences for humans and the environment of the nuclear tests conducted on its territory during colonial rule. Therefore, as we have said repeatedly, there is no substitute for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Its entry into force must be a priority. It is therefore of paramount importance that the remaining eight annex 2 countries that have not yet signed or ratified the CTBT do so as soon as possible. In its capacity as co-Chair of the Article XIV Conference of the CTBT until 2021, Algeria will spare no effort to work for the achievement of the entry into force of the CTBT at the earliest time possible.

As we all admit, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones all over the globe is not only a measure of confidence but also a real step towards the complete and general elimination of nuclear weapons.

Therefore, Algeria has contributed within its region to adopting the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Pelindaba. My country, which was among the first African States to ratify the Treaty of Pelindaba, calls upon the remaining States to sign and ratify its three annexed protocols.

In that context, Algeria welcomes the successful convening of the first Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction in November 2019. That Conference was a major step forward, and all invited parties were called upon to constructively participate in its second session, in 2021, in order to negotiate a legally binding treaty that satisfies the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

Concerning the other instruments related to weapons of mass destruction, Algeria considers that the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention constitute relevant components of the international legal architecture and calls for their effective implementation. We also call for further fostering international cooperation to allow the transfer of chemical and biological technologies, especially to the benefit of developing countries.

Regarding conventional weapons, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to pose a deep and enduring threat to peace, security and stability in many regions around the world, particularly in Africa. For its part, Algeria continues to accord high priority to securing its borders, sparing no efforts in dismantling criminal networks and contributing to the fight against the growing scourge of terrorism, in particular in the Sahel region. In that vein, Algeria looks forward to the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to be convened in 2021.

While making allowance for its Mediterranean policy, based upon the principles of cooperation, good-neighbourliness and mutual respect, Algeria, as in previous years, will submit to the First Committee during this session its annual draft resolution, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region" (A/C.1/75/L.31). In that regard, the Algerian delegation counts on the co-sponsorship and support of all members for the adoption of that draft resolution.

Algeria stresses the importance of the prevention of an arms race in outer space through a legally binding instrument that would complement the international legal framework in a manner that allows for the equal exploration of outer space based on the principles of non-appropriation and peaceful uses of outer space in conformity with the five United Nations treaties governing space activities.

Turning to other disarmament measures and international security, Algeria welcomes the progress made in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. We reiterate our readiness to work constructively with all the Member States for the success of that first inclusive institutional process launched under United Nations auspices and for the adoption of its final report by consensus in 2021.

The United Nations disarmament machinery is regrettably eroding. The Conference on Disarmament (CD) still suffers from a lack of political will, which constitutes the major reason for the unfortunate deadlock. We therefore urge all CD Member States to agree on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work. My country, which assumed the first rotating presidency of the CD in 2020, presented, on behalf of the six Presidents of the CD, a package on the improved and effective functioning of the CD that could constitute a basis to make future positive progress regarding the revitalization of that body.

Furthermore, Algeria expresses its concern at the inability of the Disarmament Commission to convene its organizational and substantive sessions in 2019 and hopes that, by both addressing the underlying issues and avoiding the politicization of its work, the Commission will hold its substantive sessions in 2021 in a formal setting, so as to fulfil its mandate.

In conclusion, while the world is facing a new threat that calls for our full solidarity and common commitment, that challenge should not impede the tremendous efforts that our countries have invested in establishing and strengthening the disarmament architecture. As we move forward towards a more global response to the coronavirus disease and its aftermath, we ought to be inspired by the valuable achievements of multilateralism and strive to achieve more tangible progress on disarmament and non-proliferation. Our responsibility is bigger, and the time to demonstrate

the willingness of States to reap the benefits of our commitments has come.

Finally, my delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of African States and the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): On behalf of the Polish delegation, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee and assure you of Poland's full support and cooperation in the fulfilment of your responsibilities.

Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2). Let me highlight several issues in my national capacity.

The global pandemic has also had an impact on the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. In that context, we hope that the circumstances will allow the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to be conducted at the earliest possible date in New York and in its full-fledged format.

Fifty years after its entry into force, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is still the cornerstone of the global regime for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The international community should do its utmost to strengthen, universalize and implement the provisions of the Treaty. Poland, as a member of the NPT Bureau and Chair of the Main Committee II, attaches great importance to the successful outcome of the Conference.

The global arms control system has unfortunately continued to deteriorate. As of today, the New START Treaty remains the only non-conventional arms control mechanism in place after the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, due to the long-standing non-compliance by the Russian Federation. However, there is hope that the current United States-Russian talks on arms control can bring about not only the extension of the New START Treaty, but also create plausible conditions for negotiations on a new, broader arms control framework that addresses all types of nuclear weapons, including on the non-strategic component. We are also in favour of extending the dialogue to include China. The aspiration to play the role of a State with significant military potential requires not only expanding one's military strength but, above all, responsibility based on

transparency and trust. We count on a positive reaction from Beijing, which would respond to the numerous voices in the international community on that matter.

The re-emergence of chemical weapons remains one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. Poland is deeply concerned that, despite their prohibition, chemical weapons have been used around the world in recent years: in Iraq, Malaysia, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Regrettably, lately we have seen further worrisome developments confirming that the danger of chemical-weapon use is real and requires our joint and resolute action. In that regard, we condemn in the strongest possible terms the effort to poison Mr. Alexei Navalny in the Russian Federation. Any breach of international law due to the use of chemical weapons must be properly investigated. We demand that the perpetrators be held accountable.

We must send a clear and univocal signal, followed by tangible steps. The General Assembly must send a strong sign of support on behalf of the whole international community for the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. This year's draft resolution on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (A/C.1/75/L.36), which Poland will introduce in the General Assembly, as in previous years, offers an excellent opportunity to do that. Our efforts to curb the proliferation of chemical weapons have brought about undeniable success, but we must not be complacent or neglect the remaining challenges in that area.

We continue to face global security threats. The complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains an absolute imperative and priority for the entire international community. Therefore, we call on North Korean authorities to abandon their nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, immediately cease all relevant activities, return to the NPT and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and fully comply with the numerous Security Council resolutions on that matter, as well as to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the CWC without further delay.

On another regional issue relating to global security, we took note of the latest IAEA report and the joint

statement issued by Director General Rafael Grossi and Iran in August. That should be considered a positive step in the right direction towards clarifying outstanding issues related to safeguards implementation by Iran. At the same time, we highlight the crucial importance of the full implementation by Iran of its commitments under the NPT, as well as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Being in breach of the JCPOA's provisions with regard to exceeding uranium stocks and enrichment levels is a matter of serious concern and should be swiftly reversed by the Iranian authorities in order to comply fully with the accord. In that regard, let me assure the Committee that Poland, as a newly elected member of the IAEA Board of Governors, will spare no effort to work and cooperate with the international community to confirm and strengthen the importance of the Agency.

The events of this year have served to highlight the importance of a free, open, stable and secure cyberspace. Poland will continue efforts to ensure responsible State behaviour and to implement the strategic framework for conflict prevention in cyberspace. Poland supports cooperation based on the application of existing international law, in particular the entire Charter of the United Nations, as well as on the 11 cybernorms for responsible State behaviour, agreed by the 2015 Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security. The conclusions of the discussions within the Open-ended Working Group and the Group of Governmental Experts will pave the way for the next steps focused on the implementation of already agreed norms.

Therefore, Poland joins and supports initiatives towards advancing better understanding of States' views on the implementation of international law in cyberspace, as well as promoting confidence measures and capacity-building based on actual needs of various States.

Emerging technologies enable new methods and means of warfare, raising fundamental questions that cut across traditional concepts of international relations and international law. From a security perspective, there are concerns about the ability of new weapons to destabilize security relations and increase unpredictability. That may be the case, for example, with new sophisticated hypersonic weapons and anti-satellite systems. There are concerns over the potential of new technologies being used to conduct malicious activities

that fall short of traditional thresholds for the use of armed force. Due to the rapidly evolving nature of technology-related challenges, legally binding instruments might not provide us with adequate solutions. Rather, we should look for more pragmatic solutions, starting with increased transparency and confidence-building measures.

In conclusion, we strongly believe that our 2020 deliberations will bring about important results and allow us to build a foundation and give new impetus to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament issues, which remain an unchangeable paradigm of the global security architecture.

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation. I also congratulate you as today is the National Day of Spain. I would also like to thank the President of the General Assembly and the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for their presence and statements (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

Much has changed since the Committee's previous session. The pandemic we are facing poses challenges and threats that require effective and efficient commitments. Argentina has built an international security and non-proliferation policy on two levels: the first relates to respect for the right to the development and peaceful use of advanced technologies; the second relates to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — whether nuclear, chemical or biological — and their means of delivery and related technologies.

International public opinion demands concrete proposals for irreversible, verifiable and transparent disarmament. Argentina shares that vision. Delaying adherence to obligations to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world does not void those commitments; on the contrary, it reaffirms the need to make louder demands.

Unfortunately, experience shows that achievements on global peace, security and stability cannot be taken for granted and require a permanent commitment to strengthen the agreements that are the basis of that progress. For Argentina, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The forthcoming Review

Conference of the Parties to the NPT, which will be presided over by Argentina, will serve to insist on the importance of defending the balance of obligations and rights for States parties, which today, after more than 50 years, continues to be valid.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a clear and urgent objective. We are glad that every year more and more States are making the decision to sign or ratify it. However, it is likely that the only way for the Treaty to finally enter into force is through a step by annex 2 States.

In the current international context of eroding agreements on disarmament and non-proliferation, Argentina expresses its support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and agrees that it has been a step forward in the search for a comprehensive solution to the dispute over Iran's nuclear programme and a concrete and positive contribution to non-proliferation and international security. Argentina stresses once again the importance of sustaining the negotiation process that led to the achievement of that agreement.

Argentina considers that verification is fundamental and is applicable not only to non-proliferation instruments but also in the field of disarmament. It is particularly important for a country like Argentina to highlight the role of non-nuclear-weapon States in legitimizing the disarmament process and its verification, especially in the context of article VI of the NPT. It is essential to develop capacities to that end so that all countries — nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States alike — can contribute to and participate in the process.

Latin America has historically been at the forefront of disarmament and non-proliferation. As early as 1991, Argentina and Brazil established the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials to implement mutual safeguards, thus building mutual confidence and the confidence of the international community in the exclusively peaceful nature of our respective nuclear plans. The Agency's existence for more than 25 years demonstrates that there are valid alternatives for other regions in which mistrust persists.

Even before the NPT's entry into force, the contribution to regional and global peace and security made by the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco has been real and effective. Argentina once again calls on the nuclear-

weapon States to review the interpretative declarations of the Treaty's protocols.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and in any circumstances is unacceptable and constitutes a flagrant violation of international obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law, and anyone responsible for their use must be brought to justice. We must strive to act with unity of purpose and avoid political divisions that could weaken the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Argentina reaffirms the fundamental importance of the Biological Weapons Convention and renews its commitment to continuing to actively and constructively cooperate in advancing the full implementation and universalization of the Convention, including through confidence-building measures.

Argentina has maintained an active role in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), working to constantly update the resolution's regulatory framework, participating in the key coordination mechanisms related to non-proliferation and technology and physical security, and improving its ability to effectively implement the resolution's mandate. Argentina has been working to that end in coordination with all relevant national bodies in order to update its national implementation report and matrix, which were submitted in 2019.

Argentina notes with concern the increase in malicious activities in cyberspace, which have affected — in the very throes of the pandemic — the regular operations of health, education and Government institutions and other critical infrastructure. Argentina actively participates in the meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on cybersecurity, an inclusive and transparent forum, and hopes to agree on recommendations in March that will help promote responsible behaviour by States and an open, free, secure and peaceful cyberspace.

Argentina recognizes the common interest of all humankind and the sovereign right of every State to participate in the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes and is convinced of its potential benefits for human development.

Argentina therefore considers that preventing an arms race in outer space would help avert a serious threat to international peace and security. Argentina

recognizes the need to negotiate, within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Meanwhile, the adoption of international transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities is undoubtedly desirable and necessary.

Small arms remain a central problem that affects peace and stability and the development of nations. The unregulated trade of such weapons can intensify armed conflict. Their impact is measured not only in the thousands of deaths and millions of injuries they cause every day but also in the effects they have in disrupting access to health, markets, education and human rights.

It is therefore necessary to reiterate the importance of relevant international mechanisms and the need to explore synergies among them. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the International Tracing Instrument, the Firearms Protocol and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) are key instruments in that regard.

As one of the ATT's co-authors, Argentina attaches great importance to it and maintains its active role and continued commitment to the Treaty. My country also presided over the sixth Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, which was held under written procedure because of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Argentina continues to promote confidence-building and transparency measures in various areas and participated actively in the process of establishing the Register of Conventional Arms, as demonstrated by our chairmanship of the Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development, established pursuant to resolution 71/44. This year, Argentina will also submit a draft resolution entitled "Information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", for which it hopes to once again count on the broad support of the international community.

Mr. Uzunovski (North Macedonia): North Macedonia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2). We would also like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

In these terrible times and the specific conditions of this session, we are reminded of the need for closer

cooperation and effective multilateralism, which will be particularly important for the work of the First Committee.

North Macedonia attaches great importance to regional stability and cooperation in its foreign policy. As we did two years ago, we submitted a draft decision under agenda item 97 this year in order to retain on the General Assembly's agenda the item related to the further promotion of good-neighbourliness, cooperation and integration in South-Eastern Europe. In our view, that item is of the utmost significance for the Western Balkans and the broader region, as well as Europe. We started that process many years ago, mindful of its crucial value to the security, lasting stability and sustainable development of the region. A large portion of our statement will be focused on that agenda item.

In the past two years, the region has undergone positive changes, which brought about a more encouraging climate in the Balkans. We deem it necessary that those developments be duly reflected in this year's session.

After its signing in June 2018, the so-called Prespa Agreement entered into force in February 2019, thereby settling a 27-year-old difference with Greece. As a small country in South-Eastern Europe, we have contributed to regional stability by resolving a complex dispute through the mediation of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, whose report on the work of the Organization last year (A/74/1) rightly mentioned the agreement between North Macedonia and Greece as one of the bright spots of the latest reporting period.

That achievement confirms yet again that dialogue and diplomacy are still the best approaches to the settlement of problems and differences, as well as to creating conditions for further development. The Prespa Agreement, along with the Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation, which we signed with Bulgaria, accelerated our NATO integration, and this year we became its thirtieth member.

That milestone should serve as the catalyst for other transformative processes in South-Eastern Europe. What remains is to implement in good faith what we have agreed to, following best practices and international legal standards, which will benefit not only our two countries but the entire region. In parallel with the substantial progress in reforms at home, we have made strong arguments for opening accession

negotiations with the European Union (EU), hopefully in December.

We would like to point out one good example of successful regional cooperation — the activities undertaken with Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre supporting partners, especially during phase 1 of the programme for combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and protection against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks. All countries achieved significant results in the context of that programme; national strategic frameworks were strengthened, appropriate policies created and specific action plans adopted.

We also strongly support all initiatives and ongoing processes — led by various actors — that contribute to the stability of the region and its integration with the EU.

Unfortunately, the region still faces challenges and unresolved political disputes that could affect its overall stability and have the potential to reverse the progress made in its recent history. The solution to those problems hinges on our ability to overcome historical myths and ideologies of domination.

Further efforts are needed to deal with the remaining challenges. For those reasons, it is very important to continue promoting a culture of good-neighbourliness, cooperation, stability and integration in order to enhance the overall development of the region. Using that approach and in the light of positive examples over the past two years, even the most difficult problems that seem impossible to resolve can be overcome. It is time to replace mistrust and to establish the foundations of a new era in the Balkans.

It is a fact that responsibility for stability and development in South-Eastern Europe rests primarily with the countries of the region. But it is also a fact that continued integration into the EU of the countries in that part of Europe has favourably influenced the overall situation and stability in the region. The most successful peace project in history — the foundation of the European Union — will be completed once all the countries of our region are fully integrated into the EU.

Allow me to elaborate our positions on other issues relevant to the work of the First Committee.

On 24 December, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) will celebrate its sixth anniversary. We attach great

importance to the ATT, as it represents a document of great significance. North Macedonia joins the countries that expressed the view that arms transfers are still a large contributor to human suffering. We support the call for strong and effective implementation of the ATT. The reporting obligations under article 13 of the Treaty are the key to bringing transparency to the global arms trade, and we urge transparency in all ATT processes. We also join the call for its universalization.

With regard to the information and communications technology (ICT) processes, the coronavirus disease pandemic has illustrated the substantial role that ICTs play in multiple dimensions of our lives. Yet our societies face a serious challenge from those who seek to manage the strategic priorities of other countries for their own interests — from hybrid threats to cyberattacks and, most critically in our region, fake news. Targeted disinformation campaigns have the potential to significantly undermine public confidence in Government institutions by challenging the core values of societies, which have already become a known common denominator.

In order to better respond and be better prepared, in 2018 North Macedonia adopted a national strategy for cybersecurity with an action plan that is being implemented through 2022.

We follow closely the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and North Macedonia is a firm supporter of the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We share its concerns about the possible use of chemical weapons. We also support independent investigation mechanisms, as the use of chemical weapons is completely unacceptable under any circumstance and constitutes a serious breach of international humanitarian law. We therefore support ensuring accountability — at both the national and international levels — for those responsible for such crimes.

Given the current alarming situation regarding the treaties regulating nuclear weapons, we share the concerns about the continued risk of an eventual use of nuclear weapons and the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences that would ensue.

Many momentous dates coincide this year. As we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and mark the fiftieth anniversary of the NPT, we also remember 75 years since the first test and use of nuclear weapons in war. We would like to believe

that those milestones should create more motivation for the key NPT parties to make more efforts than at previous conferences to reach an agreement on hard issues for the sake of a successful outcome of the 2021 Review Conference.

In addition, all NPT parties need to do their part to promote an outcome that strengthens the non-proliferation regime and puts us on a more promising path. At this stage, it will be critical to achieve results; even if they focus on specific issues, that would be preferable to remaining in stalemate. The 2021 NPT Review Conference must have a productive outcome that will re-establish trust in the regime and its pillars.

The present situation is a powerful reminder of the level of commitment required when it comes to the provisions and pillars of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). As a committed State party to the implementation of the BWC, we have presided over the Meeting of the States parties twice in the past 13 years. We fully support the Secretary-General's position that we need to "think creatively about the future evolution of the Convention and how to uphold its central role in preventing the misuse of biology for hostile purposes".

In conclusion, allow me, Sir, to reiterate North Macedonia's support for your efforts and work to bring this session of the First Committee to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Sautter (Germany): Germany fully aligns itself with the statement by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

On behalf of Germany, I congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. Be assured of Germany's full support.

This year's session of the First Committee is taking place in the face of concerning developments. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has overturned diplomacy. At the same time, our common security and the rules-based multilateral order, not least in the field of arms control, continue to be challenged.

An especially worrisome development is the recent attack on Alexei Navalny, in Russia, by means of a particularly dangerous nerve agent. That constitutes yet another shocking case of the use of a chemical weapon, two years after a similar weapon was used by Russia on British territory. The use of a nerve agent has

been confirmed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as well as by three independent national laboratories. This is a matter of grave international concern, as any use of chemical weapons, anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances, is unacceptable and contravenes international standards and norms against such use. We continue to call on Russia, on whose territory the attack took place, to investigate and to disclose in a swift and transparent manner the circumstances of that crime. No credible explanation has been provided by Russia so far.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria has demonstrated the devastating impact of that particularly abominable kind of weapon on the Syrian people and the country as a whole. The first report of the Investigation and Identification Team was an important step in the fight against impunity.

We call on all those that continue to support the Al-Assad regime and to provide cover for its crimes — in particular the Russian Federation — to finally live up to their responsibility. Russia should use its influence on Syria to finally bring it into compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Germany remains committed to supporting efforts to stand up against such breaches of the Geneva Protocol and the Chemical Weapons Convention, and we reiterate our full confidence in the technical expertise, objectivity, impartiality and independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

I turn now to the issues of nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Today we should be looking back at the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, but COVID-19 forced the world to radically adjust agendas. We now have more time to thoroughly prepare the Review Conference and jointly strengthen the nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation regime, which is at a critical juncture. The task remains challenging, and the risks of escalation are high.

It was against that backdrop that Foreign Minister Heiko Maas initiated two Security Council meetings in support of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in 2019 and 2020. Indeed, 2021 must be the year for the NPT community as a whole to add new chapters to the success story of the nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation regime. To that end, we strongly support Ambassador Zlauvinen

in his efforts to find the right date and setting for a full-fledged conference to be held in an environment conducive to success. Success can mean only progress on all three pillars of the NPT. In the face of a number of disturbing trends, it is all the more important to show that article VI has to be implemented. Let us work towards a world without nuclear weapons.

At their meeting in Berlin earlier this year, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Stockholm Initiative presented a broad set of concrete measures that nuclear-weapon States can take now to advance nuclear disarmament: restraint in nuclear strategies, transparency on arsenals and measures to reduce nuclear risks. We call on nuclear-weapon States to show leadership and take those steps today. At the same time, non-nuclear-weapon States can and should contribute to laying the ground for a world without nuclear weapons.

We can help to reduce the risk of inadvertent escalation. That is why Germany, together with Finland, has assumed the co-chairmanship on nuclear-risk reduction in the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative.

We can all do more in promoting nuclear education and empowering the younger generation to shape our future in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States can work together in developing robust and proliferation-proof procedures to verify the dismantling of a nuclear weapon. In 2019, together with France, we conducted a practical exercise to that end, and we are committed to continuing that work with our partners in the framework of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the Group of Governmental Experts.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), by eliminating all nuclear testing, will bring us closer to our goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We renew our call on all States that have not signed and ratified the CTBT to show leadership and do so.

Needless to say, starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty would have a positive impact on both non-proliferation and disarmament. We welcome the recent rounds of strategic talks between the United States and Russia and call on both sides to show leadership by extending the New START Treaty and by entering into negotiations on a future and broader

arms-control framework that also engages China more strongly. An extended New START Treaty constitutes the best basis for such future negotiations. New START remains an important contribution to nuclear arms control that should be preserved.

On Iran, Germany remains fully committed to the preservation and full implementation of resolution 2231 (2015), including the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). While we have repeatedly expressed our regret over the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA and the reimposed United States sanctions, Germany is deeply concerned over the measures taken by Iran since July 2019, which are contrary to key nuclear-related provisions under the JCPOA.

In particular, we are worried about the increasing accumulation of low-enriched uranium and the continued expansion of Iran's centrifuge research and development activities. Those measures undermine the non-proliferation benefits of the agreement and, in the case of research and development activities, have irreversible proliferation implications. We strongly urge Iran to stop and reverse all activities inconsistent with its JCPOA commitments and to refrain from any new steps that would violate the agreement. Iran needs to return to full compliance without delay.

Furthermore, it is crucial that Iran extend full cooperation to the International Atomic Energy Agency, in line with its safeguards obligations under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol.

We also reiterate in clear terms our call on Iran to refrain from ballistic-missile activities, including missile tests and launches, that are inconsistent with resolution 2231 (2015), annex B. Moreover, we strongly urge Iran to cease transfers of missiles and missile technology to States and non-State actors in the region, in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

On the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we remain gravely concerned about the country's continuously advancing nuclear-weapon and missile programmes. It is critical that we, as the international community, make a strong case about this. Our handling of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's persistent violations of international law is a credibility test for the international non-proliferation architecture.

We condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missile tests as well as its policy of threats and

ultimatums. We call on it to return to the negotiating table with a clear goal, as has been unanimously decided by the Security Council: the complete, verifiable and irreversible abandonment of its nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and ballistic-missile programmes.

To conclude, our hope is that the pandemic will not divide us but teach us to work more closely together during this year's session of the First Committee.

Mr. Vongnorkeo (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Mr. Chair, let me begin by extending my sincerest congratulations to you and to the members of the Bureau on your election, and I assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Viet Nam on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned countries and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), respectively (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

As we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, it is of paramount importance to underscore the interconnected nature of peace, security and development as well as the link between disarmament and economic and social development. Therefore, the work of the First Committee is crucial, as it contributes to the promotion of global peace and security, creating an environment conducive to sustainable development globally.

In that context, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reiterates its full support for the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament and his appeal for a global ceasefire amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Likewise, my delegation remains concerned at the increasing global military expenditures and armed conflicts, which could further hamper efforts to increase support for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance and to promote a peaceful environment for development, poverty eradication and a unified global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis.

On nuclear weapons, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reiterates its strong support for international efforts to make our world free from nuclear weapons. We are of the view that nuclear weapons remain a serious concern and continue to threaten international peace and security. So long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of accidental, mistaken or unauthorized use could

cause massive catastrophic destruction to humankind. Therefore, we believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only fundamental guarantee against their use or threat of use.

On the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, we firmly believe that it is necessary to step up efforts to implement the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), namely, nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which serves the best interests of the international community. We therefore call upon the nuclear-weapon States to renew their commitment to the full implementation of the Treaty, particularly its article VI.

While welcoming the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the NPT, in 2020, my delegation calls for constructive and productive deliberations and negotiations at the upcoming NPT Review Conference next year. On nuclear-weapon-free zones, my delegation is of the view that the creation of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones has made a significant contribution to the strengthening of global nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, eventually leading to a nuclear-free world. To that end, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is a strong supporter of preserving the South-East Asia region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, free from all weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and the ASEAN Charter.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in September last year and welcomes those States that have already submitted their instruments of ratification and accession to the Treaty. In that regard, we call upon other States that have not done so to join the Treaty in order to facilitate its early entry into force, so that it can further contribute to the realization of making the world free from nuclear weapons.

My delegation welcomes the High-level Plenary Meeting to Commemorate and Promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, held earlier this month. We believe that we should redouble our efforts to raise public awareness and promote education on the danger of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, so that future generations will not follow the path of acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

Likewise, the Lao People's Democratic Republic underlines the importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which aims to promote nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. However, more than two decades after its adoption, the CTBT remains ineffective. It is therefore the duty of the international community to ensure an early entry into force of the Treaty and to urge those who have not done so to sign and ratify the CTBT.

On cyberspace, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is of the view that a collective effort and commitment on the part of the international community is needed in order to promote the use of information and communications technologies for socioeconomic development and for maintaining peace and stability in cyberspace. In that context, we welcome the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, especially to further develop rules, norms and principles for the responsible behaviour of States in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm my delegation's strong support for the international efforts in the areas of disarmament and international security and to emphasize our specific needs in addressing the serious impact of cluster munitions, as the unexploded ordnance littered across and contaminating our country continues to kill and maim innocent people, especially children, and hinders our national development to this very day, long after the Viet Nam war ended, more than four decades ago. Against that backdrop, the Lao People's Democratic Republic previously adopted our specific national Millennium Development Goal 9, which is now Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 18, entitled "Lives safe from unexploded ordnance", to continue addressing the problems caused by cluster munitions. We count on the continued and enhanced support and cooperation of the international community to help the Lao People's Democratic Republic implement that specific national SDG 18 along with other SDGs.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your election. Let me also take this opportunity to extend to you very warm and brotherly congratulations on Spain's national day, the Fiesta Nacional de España.

Coordinating the work of the First Committee is never a simple task. It is an even more complex challenge in these difficult times. Brazil is on hand to assist you, Sir, in your efforts to ensure a productive session.

As we sit here today, six feet apart from each other, one might think that the main threats we now face are of a different nature than those addressed by our predecessors. However, new challenges cannot divert our attention from the old menaces that we still need to overcome.

Fifty years after the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the regime built around it shows signs of structural stress. Central commitments and undertakings are being questioned, abandoned or forgotten. Due to circumstances beyond our control, we had to postpone to 2021 the long-awaited tenth NPT Review Conference. Let us take this extra year to reflect on how to renew our commitment to all three pillars of the Treaty — disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

We will very soon witness the entry into force of the most important international agreement negotiated in the field of disarmament in recent years. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons represents an evolutionary leap for the disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

We know that the road to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is long and winding, but the path would be less tortuous if the comprehensive ban on nuclear testing came to fruition. Every year, delegation after delegation uses this forum to call on the annex 2 States that have not yet ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to do so, thereby allowing the Treaty to enter into force. I echo their call.

As a proud member of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a permanently inhabited area, Brazil believes that the strengthening of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and the creation of new ones, on the basis of agreements freely arrived at by all States of the region concerned, will be another decisive step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We also take pride in having developed, with Argentina, an innovative and highly successful model of nuclear-safeguards implementation through the establishment of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency

for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC). The ABACC's main goal is to offer additional guarantees that all nuclear materials and installations in both of our countries are used solely for peaceful purposes. This model was further strengthened by the signing of the Quadripartite Agreement between Brazil, Argentina, the ABACC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Together, those agreements placed both nuclear programmes under a double-layered system of safeguards.

The ABACC model is based on frequent and successive interactions between the nuclear authorities of both countries and recurrent inspections, under the comprehensive supervision of the IAEA. That allows for a level of deep mutual knowledge and transparency, thereby making the possibility of its infringement virtually inconceivable. The ABACC inspection model therefore goes above and beyond the standard comprehensive safeguards agreements by providing guarantees about the absence of undeclared activities, materials and/or facilities in both countries.

The rampant malicious use and increasing weaponization of information and communications technologies by States is a matter of the utmost concern. We can no longer tolerate unchecked behaviour in cyberspace without putting our shared values of peace, security, democracy and human rights in peril.

We need to restore consensus when dealing with cybersecurity issues within the United Nations. Brazil remains firmly convinced that both the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security and the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security can and should work harmoniously, while focusing on the complementarity that exists between them and converging on the establishment of a unified institutional dialogue mechanism. As the country whose expert chairs the Group of Governmental Experts, Brazil is ready to contribute to that effort.

In Brazil's view, the consensual reports adopted by past Groups of Governmental Experts constitute an important *acquis* in terms of non-binding principles, norms and rules for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace. Their implementation is the best way to safeguard an open, secure, peaceful

and inclusive information and communications technology environment.

The historical window for adopting an appropriate legal framework to regulate the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) is narrowing quickly. Brazil believes that a legally binding instrument is the best option to ensure human control over critical functions in autonomous systems, which is paramount to preventing violations of international law.

Throughout last year, Brazil organized and co-sponsored a number of initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue and furthering our common understanding of the issue of LAWS, including a table-top exercise on the human element and autonomous weapons systems for Latin America and the Caribbean, carried out by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in early September, with the support of the Brazilian Foreign Ministry, as well as the Rio Seminar on Autonomous Weapons Systems held in February. Those numerous initiatives spearheaded by Brazil should provide valuable input for debate in the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, so that it can issue recommendations to the 2021 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons.

The outer space environment is fragile, and space assets are at the core of the infrastructure of all nations, not only space-faring nations. All States Members of the United Nations have a stake in maintaining space as a peaceful and secure environment and ensuring its sustainable use. Preventing the militarization and weaponization of outer space is of the utmost relevance.

Biological weapons have the lowest level of international regulation. It is high time to move forward on strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), including through a verification protocol. We should not remain idle while the field of life sciences is going through a scientific and technological revolution, with several dual-use innovations already being deployed. The next BWC Review Conference will be an opportunity to restart negotiations on strengthening the Convention.

While biological weapons are poorly regulated, chemical weapons are under intense international scrutiny. The Chemical Weapons Convention is the gold standard for multilateral regimes on weapons of mass destruction. It has established a comprehensive, legally

binding and non-discriminatory prohibition and is equipped with a full-fledged and effective verification mechanism. It is unfortunate that, even with all these institutional apparatuses, we still see the use of those weapons in different regions of the world.

Conventional weapons are a legitimate and essential means for States to ensure their self-defence and national sovereignty. However, the uncontrolled flow of such weapons and their ammunition has profoundly destabilizing effects, and their diversion to illicit markets and to non-State actors fuels conflict and violent crime worldwide.

We look forward to the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Review 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, to be held next year. It will be an opportunity to discuss in depth the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action, in particular the issue of preventing diversion. We also look forward to the continuation of the good work done by the Group of Governmental Experts on the Continuing Operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its Further Development.

Like other multilateral forums, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) suffered a reduction of its activities due to pandemic-related constraints. The coordination among the six presidencies, however, has surpassed initial expectations, demonstrating that a cross-regional group can work together constructively. As one of the countries that will take over the presidency of the CD next year, Brazil looks forward to replicating the experience of the six presidencies in 2021.

In these new times, when novel threats are added to old perils, we must bear in mind that building a safer future is our shared responsibility. May the work of this Committee help us fulfil that paramount task.

Mrs. Hillebrandt (Bahamas): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections and assure you of the support of the Bahamas to actively engage in the First Committee, which is continuing its important work under extraordinary circumstances, due in large part to your management and leadership.

The Bahamas aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representatives of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Caribbean Community, and Indonesia,

on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

One of the many lessons of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is a reminder of how problems and solutions are interconnected. The emergence of the virus in the human population is not only a health problem; it has impacted every sector and service to which we have become accustomed. Similarly, it has no one singular cause. It is through understanding spill-over causes and effects that we can hope to find concrete remedies to our most pressing challenges. Simply put, the pandemic has reminded us of what is inherently essential to humankind's safety, dignity and prosperity — and what is not. One of the most critical elements for humankind is the effective maintenance of peace and security through multilateral cooperation and a genuine commitment towards effective disarmament. It is with that perspective that the Bahamas approaches the seventy-fifth session of the First Committee.

The Bahamas acknowledges that reality and therefore prioritizes the promotion of mutually beneficial efforts to advance both sustainable development and disarmament. It is a well-established fact — reinforced, *inter alia*, by the Secretary-General in his agenda for disarmament — that the linkages between international peace and security, which includes disarmament and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, are manifold. While we have become accustomed to references to Goal 16 and its specific targets in the context of the First Committee, goals and targets relating to health, education, gender equality, sustainable communities and decent work and economic growth have also been highlighted as benefiting from the implementation of disarmament measures. Illustrating those connections, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has supplied more than half of the world's countries with equipment to detect COVID-19, using a nuclear-based testing method called reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction, or RT-PCR, an acronym with which we have all become familiar.

For small island developing States such as the Bahamas, the notion of a shared heritage has wide applications within the disarmament machinery and its relevant bodies, instruments and initiatives. From the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction to security threats in cyberspace and outer space, the imperative to comply with international law, including international humanitarian law and General Assembly and Security Council resolutions,

and to observe international norms and engage in responsible State behaviour is as critical now as ever. In an international context of continued, and in some cases, exacerbated multilateral, regional and bilateral tensions, mistrust and isolationism, and in the light of the risks associated with emerging technologies and innovations, leveraging both long-standing and recent gains in our common objectives can provide new impetus for gaps and stalemates within the machinery.

The Bahamas urges Member States to embrace cooperation and partnership with renewed vigour, fighting political fatigue with ambitious momentum to overcome the historic deadlocks on more contentious disarmament issues. In that regard, we take this opportunity to express deep appreciation to the many partners that advance the goal of disarmament and international security, including the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, United Nations regional offices, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the IAEA, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) secretariat. The Bahamas also extends its gratitude to civil society and non-governmental organizations that work tirelessly to support disarmament goals and States in their efforts to do the same.

The Bahamas believes that the sum is greater than its component parts and, as such, reaffirms its support for regional engagement on disarmament goals. As a committed party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established Latin America and the Caribbean as the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, we understand that it is important not only to lead by example but to also build on achievements. In that connection, the Bahamas has been encouraged by the signings and ratifications of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, including by several Caribbean States, and hopes to be in a position to sign on to the Treaty following the completion of our internal review. With less than a handful of ratifications outstanding, we are hopeful for its imminent entry into force.

From a national perspective, the Bahamas remains plagued by the illicit transfer and use of small arms and light weapons. As a small island developing State geographically located in a strategic route for the transnational shipment of conventional arms and related transnational organized criminal activity, the illicit trade and use of small arms and light weapons

represents an enormous challenge both nationally and for the region. Despite ongoing crime-prevention efforts, COVID-19 has exacerbated the impact of the illicit use of small arms and light weapons. Unemployment, national lockdowns, extreme fiscal uncertainty and multiple strains on social services all contribute to increasing tensions in households and communities, which give rise to ripe conditions for gun-related crimes. Of particular concern for the Bahamas is the link between gun-related crimes and domestic violence. Gender-based and intimate-partner violence, as well as violence against children and persons in vulnerable groups, are opportunities for the extreme escalation of harm against the individual. It is for that reason that the Bahamas is a proud co-sponsor of the biennial draft resolution submitted by Trinidad and Tobago entitled “Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control” (A/C.1/75/L.21), which recognizes the vital role of women in efforts to respond to peace and security, as well as the important contributions of young people.

As a non-exporting State with limited conventional arms importation, the Bahamas cannot overstate the significance of the Arms Trade Treaty and our reliance on the full and transparent implementation of the Treaty and related programmes, protocols and instruments. In that regard, we welcome the recent ratifications of the Treaty and lend overwhelming support for the universalization of the ATT. Likewise, the Bahamas fully supports the Voluntary Trust Fund as a valuable mechanism to assist nations in the implementation of the Treaty and to promote cooperation and engagement with its obligations.

In conclusion, permit me to observe that the postponement of several disarmament-related processes, such as the substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the NPT Review Conference and the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Review 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, as well as the modifications in the working methods of several other processes, including the main session of the First Committee itself, provide a unique opportunity for each and every one of us to take stock of our situation. Let us demonstrate the true solidarity our mandate requires of us in order to secure our common future.

Ms. Mudallali (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on

your election as Chair of the First Committee for the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and wish them every success in leading the Committee amid these exceptional circumstances. I also cannot fail to thank the delegation of Bolivia for its wise leadership of the First Committee during the previous session. I had the honour of participating in the Bureau last year as Vice-Chair. You can count, Mr. Chair, on the support of Lebanon’s delegation in your efforts to lead a successful session and reach the best outcome.

My country’s delegation supports 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 (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

We are living amid the strenuous situation caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has turned our lives and futures upside down. However, the world also continues to live in the shadow of a nuclear catastrophe, as the Secretary-General said earlier this month. Seventy-five years after the establishment of the United Nations and its most lofty objective, which is to rid the world of nuclear weapons, we still live under an ineffective arms control and nuclear disarmament regime, as rivalry among the major Powers and tensions in international security relations are at the highest level for generations.

The nightmare of the COVID-19 pandemic should be an alarm bell regarding our priorities. The nine States that possess nuclear weapons spent \$73 billion last year on their nuclear arsenals — a 10 per cent increase over the year before. There are currently more than 13,500 nuclear weapons in the world, mostly owned by major Powers. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty is now a thing of the past. The future of the New START Treaty is in question. We hope that the current negotiations between the parties to the New START Treaty will succeed.

I would also like to recall the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in strengthening the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. There is a need for the Treaty to promptly enter into force.

All these weapons are now useless in defeating the biggest challenge facing our world. Had the money, or even a small part of it, been spent on medical research, we would now have vaccines for epidemics and

treatments for diseases. The world would have been a safer place to live.

We are not one another's enemy; our enemies are viruses, poverty, inequity, climate change and the threat of our own actions on Earth, our only home. We need to return to serious and credible negotiations on arms control, including nuclear weapons. We must separate negotiations on arms control from political battles and rivalries among major Powers.

Perhaps the delayed convening of the Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is an opportunity for us to strengthen the Treaty and renew our commitment to a stronger global Treaty that leads us to a world free of nuclear weapons. We must add the issue of arms control to our daily agenda for achieving peace and make it a priority once again. Remaining silent on this challenge will not make it disappear.

No region understands the importance of nuclear disarmament better than the Middle East. Lebanon has repeatedly expressed concern vis-à-vis the standstill in the efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in accordance with many relevant resolutions of NPT Review Conferences, in particular those of 1995 and 2010. The stalemate is due to Israel's insistence on maintaining its nuclear programme and arsenal outside of any international control. It has boycotted and underestimated the international legal system that addresses the issue of curbing nuclear proliferation. Israel continuously intentionally impedes the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East region. Lebanon is of the view that establishing such a zone is a dire need for achieving security and stability in the region of the world.

Lebanon participated in the Conference organized by the United Nations pursuant to decision 73/546, aimed at establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, presided over by the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in November 2019. In that regard, Lebanon welcomes the political declaration of the Conference and the relevant report (A/75/63) of the Secretary-General. We urge all parties to participate in its next session in a responsible manner and constructive spirit. The international community must now more than ever revitalize efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the

Middle East in accordance with the terms of reference I mentioned.

The grave threats posed by weapons of mass destruction must not make us forget the threats of conventional weapons. Lebanon, together with all peace- and security-loving countries, is extremely concerned about the increase in illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We have been very keen to implement our commitments in accordance with the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

My country's delegation reiterates Lebanon's full support to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and its universalization. The pioneering role played by Lebanon in drafting and adopting the Convention is due to the painful experience that we lived through following Israel's aggression against us using cluster munitions in 2006. Efforts must be synergized to end the use, stockpiling, manufacturing and financing of the production of such weapons in order to save innocent people from their deadly risks.

The technological revolution in the world today constitutes a major opportunity and imposes grave challenges, some of which are related to disarmament. The international community must give the issue of cybersecurity due attention and must promote international multilateral cooperation to address it within the United Nations framework. In that regard, Lebanon commends the work of the Open-ended Working Groups on Information and Communications Technology in the Context of International Security, established pursuant to resolution 73/27. We look forward to the issuance of a final report containing substantive recommendations on State behaviour in that regard.

Lebanon believes that we must protect outer space against any arms race. It must remain the shared commons of humankind and devoted solely to peaceful uses. We must work seriously to establish an internationally binding instrument that prevents the placement of weapons in outer space and military attacks against objects in it. We must maintain outer space for the benefit of humankind as a whole and a common heritage for us and for future generations. It must not be an arena for threats to the national security of countries or for creating pollution.

The Charter of the United Nations expresses our collective belief in an organic link among the objectives of peace and security, sustainable development and the protection of human rights. Lebanon believes that a comprehensive humanitarian approach to disarmament is required. The world has spent approximately \$1.917 billion on weapons — an increase of 3.6 per cent as compared to 2018. On the other hand, the health challenge that is sweeping the world has shed the light on the importance of cooperation among countries to resolve their disputes. We must bear in mind the positive effect of reducing spending on weapons for global sustainable development and the future of our world.

Mr. Prasad (Fiji): I join my colleagues in congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau and in wishing you a great success. You will have Fiji's full support in your efforts.

Fiji's statement is aligned with that delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

This year we commemorate 75 years since the signing of the Charter of the United Nations. At this important inflection point in United Nations history, it is crucial that we reaffirm our collective commitment to disarmament and arms control. Threats and challenges to peace and security have never been greater or more intense. We Member States set ourselves the Sustainable Development Goals and the deadline of 2030 for achieving them. Peace and security are essential for the achievement of those goals. Biological, cyberthreats and small arms are among the many growing threats to global peace and security and, by extension, they are growing threats to our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It has been 50 years since the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons came into force. Today we have yet to fully realize our goals on nuclear disarmament. We need greater commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to make progress on nuclear disarmament. The world can least afford an unnecessary and wasteful nuclear arms race at this time.

Fiji and other Pacific island States have been at the forefront in calling for an end to nuclear testing. For 50 years, the Pacific had been a testing site for nuclear weapons. More than 300 tests were conducted underground, in the atmosphere and underwater. People

and whole communities continue to suffer almost 50 years after the first of those tests commenced.

The blue Pacific is how Fiji and many island States identify themselves in the wider world. The vast blue Pacific is an ocean of peace — a blue Pacific that is an ocean of peace is a nuclear-free ocean as well. Fiji joins other Members States in calling on those that have yet to do so to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention have been in force for decades. The recent incidents when such weapons were used on civilians serve to highlight how far we still have to go.

Fiji acknowledges the advances made in biotechnology and welcomes its benefits for humankind. The time is now right for the United Nations to establish the necessary safeguards to stop the weaponization of biotechnology, and the international community should continue to strengthen the investigation and verification mechanisms under the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions.

The development of information and communications technology (ICT) has opened up opportunities for humankind. Communications and the Internet of things have now become an essential part of life, business and commerce. The potential is endless but, at the same time, the potential for instability and conflict arising from them are endless as well. Our widespread connectivity has also increased our vulnerability to misinformation and malicious acts by non-State actors. It has enabled individuals and groups to act across national borders. They can create major disruptions and harm to life, livelihoods and whole economies.

Small developing States lag behind in ICT development, infrastructure and the necessary safeguards. That has increased their vulnerability in an interconnected world. Fiji welcomes the work of the Group of Government Experts and the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security and looks forward to their recommendations. We need to get this right.

Space is a frontier filled with endless potential for humankind. The challenge is how to keep it free

and open, to benefit all of humankind. If space is to benefit all humankind, then the necessary safeguards and frameworks should be established to compliment the Outer Space Treaty, including strengthening the capabilities of the United Nations system, including the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. Outer space should be governed by an international regime that allows equal access. It must be weapons-free. Such a regime should detail what is responsible behaviour and conduct by State and non-State parties in outer space, establish confidence in those measures and restrict actions that can cause tension and conflict.

Disarmament and arms control can be advanced best in an environment of transparency, trust and global leadership. Part of that responsibility lies with the First Committee: to broaden trust in the international system. In that effort, you, Sir, will have the full support of Fiji.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker for this meeting.

I should like once again to remind delegations that the deadline for the rolling list of speakers for the general debate will close at 6 p.m. today. All delegations interested in taking the floor should make every effort to inscribe their names on the list before that deadline.

The next meeting of the First Committee will be held this afternoon at 3 p.m. We shall continue with the general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items. I once again appeal to all delegations to be punctual in order to enable us to proceed with our work in a timely manner.

I would also like to thank the interpreters for their work.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.