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First Committee

7th meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Santos Maraver(Spain)

*In the absence of the Chair, Mr. Hassan (Egypt),
Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda items 94 to 110 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Acting Chair: Before I open the floor for statements, I would like to remind all delegations that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions and decisions under all agenda items is 4 p.m. today.

Mr. Huot (Cambodia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their appointments and assure them of my delegation's full cooperation and support.

Cambodia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Viet Nam, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

In the coronavirus disease, the world has been facing an unprecedented pandemic that affects every aspect of our lives, ranging from human fragility through our health and our economies. In spite of that calamity, our commitment to peace, security and development remains very strong.

The nuclear threat still exists. No one can avoid its inhumane potential by simply ignoring the fact that nuclear weapons exist and are being modernized. My

delegation is of the view that Member States should establish a mechanism to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used in any circumstances. We should do our utmost to work to achieve a legally binding instrument on nuclear disarmament. On 2 October, we all assembled in the General Assembly Hall to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Along with other participants, Cambodia reaffirmed its commitment to nuclear disarmament. It is time to translate those commitments into action.

This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, a milestone in furthering the goal of nuclear disarmament. To advance that goal, State parties should make every effort to implement their obligations under the Treaty to end nuclear proliferation. In that connection, Cambodia looks forward to participating in the next Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, rescheduled for 2021, and to reaching consensus outcomes. Furthermore, in 2017 about two-thirds of the States Members of the United Nations gathered to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, whose main purpose is to prohibit and work to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We note with optimism that more and more countries are becoming signatories to that important Treaty. As a signatory country itself, Cambodia is moving forward with its ratification.

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The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), adopted in 1996, has yet to enter into force. In the meantime, Cambodia urges States to refrain from testing nuclear weapons, which runs counter to the objective of the Treaty. Cambodia commends the countries that have recently signed or ratified the CTBT and calls on those that have not yet done so to accede without delay. Where our region is concerned, Cambodia has joined other ASEAN member States in implementing its obligations under the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty with a view to ensuring that the region remains a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We also support other international efforts aimed at securing a world free of nuclear threats, while recognizing that we all have the right to use nuclear energy for development purposes.

With regard to other weapons of mass destruction, Cambodia's Constitution clearly states that the manufacturing, use and storage of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons are absolutely prohibited in our country. In addition, we have enacted a series of laws prohibiting activities related to weapons of mass destruction and strengthened our national institutions with a view to ensuring that our Constitution and laws are strictly observed.

The increase in the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons poses a great threat to our security and development. We recognize that Member States have a sovereign right to use conventional weapons, but proper regulation must be in place. Close cooperation between countries is also necessary to combat the smuggling of small arms and light weapons. It would be dangerous and harmful to our security and people's lives if such weapons fell into the hands of non-State actors or terrorists. In that connection, Cambodia appreciates the Organization's efforts and support under the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which is designed to help control the flow of weapons.

Cambodia attaches great importance to the Ottawa Convention. With international support, Cambodia has made tremendous progress since the fall of the Khmer Rouge in clearing landmines, and has destroyed millions of anti-personnel mines, cluster bombs and explosive remnants of war. The Royal Government of Cambodia has set the goal of a mine-free Cambodia by 2025. We look forward to participating actively in the eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel

Mine Ban Convention, scheduled for later this year in Geneva, and to productive outcomes from it.

I want to conclude by reiterating that peace, security and sustainable development are critical to the daily lives of all humankind. To that end, we must work closely towards our common objective, which is putting an end to every threat caused by nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction and other types of weapons so that the world can continue to prosper and our peoples can live without fear.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): Ukraine would like to join others in congratulating the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their election and assuring them of our full support.

Ukraine has consistently promoted a multilateral approach to the disarmament and international security agenda. We voluntarily abandoned all our nuclear capabilities and acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear State. We also did away with all our stocks of highly enriched uranium and refuse to use that dangerous, dual-use material. Ukraine's accession to the NPT as a non-nuclear State was accompanied by security assurances stipulated in the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances of 1994. Much to our regret, the credibility and effectiveness of some of the key pillars of the NPT have been seriously undermined by a well-known nuclear-weapon State. Two decades after signing the Budapest Memorandum, the Russian Federation — which also happens to be one of the State guarantors under the Memorandum — occupied and attempted to annex the Crimean peninsula and launched a full-scale armed offensive in the Donbas region of Ukraine. The aforementioned so-called security assurances have so far been shown to be ineffective there, to say the least.

Despite that existential threat and the current challenges to the NPT regime that we are facing, Ukraine continues to see the Treaty as a key pillar of international peace and security and an essential basis for promoting nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We continue to believe that negotiating and concluding a fissile material cut-off treaty will be essential both in order to constrain nuclear proliferation and to advance the goal of nuclear disarmament, and we call for finding common ground on that issue.

The universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remains one of the key objectives

of the multilateral efforts in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We call on the States that have yet to sign or ratify it to do so without delay. We also acknowledge the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which should be established on the basis of relevant arrangements among the States of the regions concerned.

Ukraine advocates strict adherence to the provisions of the key international instruments in the area of non-proliferation and disarmament, including the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the 1925 Geneva Protocol. In that regard, we condemn in the strongest possible terms the repeated instances of the use of chemical weapons that continue to occur, including in Europe, as well as in the case of Alexei Navalny, which many delegations have already raised. This represents a clear and present danger to all humankind. In that connection, we believe that the upcoming comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) will significantly strengthen all the existing instruments and mechanisms designed to reduce that threat.

Ukraine is committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space and actively participates in the deliberations on strengthening the international legal regime governing the use of outer space. We believe that this regime should be developed further through the use of transparency- and confidence-building measures in order to adequately address the challenges arising from the ongoing militarization of space. In that connection, Ukraine supports and will join the sponsors in the First Committee of draft resolution A/C.1/75/L.45/Rev.1, "Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours", which is aimed at exploring how best to proceed in order to ensure responsible behaviour in outer space. We are concerned about Russia's recent tests of anti-satellite missiles, which can target objects in low orbit. Such actions pose a serious threat to the peaceful use of outer space. It is especially outrageous that the State that refuses to comply with any arms-control-regime instruments seeks to play a leading role in the adoption of a legally binding instrument in the area of the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Ukraine fully shares the concern that the illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of conventional arms and ammunition, in particular small arms and light weapons, poses a serious threat to international security and stability. The Russian Federation has

continued its massive illicit transfers of military goods to our territory, deliberately destabilizing the subregion, compromising the security of all of Europe and totally ignoring the persistent calls to establish effective inter-State border controls. Such illegal transfers present an acute challenge to the proper implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which serves as the only universal international tool to address that illicit trade.

We recognize the important role of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in addressing post-conflict measures in order to minimize the occurrence, risk and effects of explosive remnants of war.

As a State party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, Ukraine acknowledges the Treaty's fundamental role in reducing the occurrence, risks and effects of landmines. Here again, as a result of the armed aggression conducted by Russia and its illegal armed groups in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, our country has had to deal with a drastic increase in the number of dangerous explosive remnants of war, causing casualties among civilians, including children.

Today we are still witnessing Russia's large-scale militarization of Crimea, including through destabilizing transfers of weapons and weapon systems, aircraft and missiles and ammunition and military personnel. Russia also continues to conduct multiple military exercises in and around Crimea, reflecting its aggressive policy towards Ukraine and other Black Sea littoral States. What is even more alarming is that we continue to see worrisome reports that air and maritime equipment for delivering nuclear weapons is being moved from Russia to Crimea. The Russian Federation has also readied the relevant nuclear infrastructure for active engagement. All in all, if we fail to address those and other challenges that our neighbour poses now, they could have far-reaching implications for security, not just in the Black Sea area but far beyond.

Ms. Sealey (Jamaica): Jamaica associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and Trinidad and Tobago, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

We meet during the seventy-fifth session against the background of a global security landscape that is complex and demanding, requiring greater urgency in our efforts to find solutions to the unfinished business of the disarmament agenda, while we address the paralyzing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its associated challenges. From Jamaica's perspective, those developments, coupled with our efforts to attain sustainable development, for which peace and security are a prerequisite, give particular importance to the current session of the First Committee.

We are all aware that the Charter of the United Nations established the framework for a system of collective security based on the prohibition of the use of force, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the formation of multilateral institutions for enforcing those principles. It is evident that those objectives, which have eluded us for 75 years, will not be realized without general and complete disarmament. Jamaica therefore reaffirms those principles as the cornerstone and foundation of our efforts and reiterates that the United Nations is critical to building a world of peace, security and development, no matter the persistent setbacks in critical areas of the disarmament agenda. However, the central question remains whether or not the existing framework can effectively address the threats we currently face.

For a small island developing State such as Jamaica, disarmament and international peace and security are central to our efforts to realize sustained development, as well as to safeguard current and future generations from the scourge of conflict. For that reason, Jamaica continues to reaffirm the importance of multilateral approaches to the issues of disarmament and development. However, that relationship can be mutually beneficial only where there is evidence of strong political will, the provision of adequate resources and continued and effective coordination and close cooperation between and among development partners.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a menace that deeply affects my country and subregion. It forms a persistent barrier to our ability to achieve a more secure and stable society in which social and economic development can be advanced. The illicit trade in such weapons has been a key driver of human suffering and has caused untold misery. We have long recognized that a significant reduction in illicit arms flows is central to ensuring that any country, big or small, rich or poor, can attain peace, security and sustained development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which we aspire to achieve, reiterates that fact.

Jamaica remains committed to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as the International Tracing Instrument. That is why, regionally, the Caribbean Community has been investing in enhancing the capacity of its member States to address issues related to arms control and disarmament by preventing the diversion of conventional arms to the illicit market. That issue will remain a priority for Jamaica. We also recognize our obligations regarding the management of stockpile ammunition and have been strengthening our stockpile management capabilities through technical assistance provided by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, we have embarked on a technical cooperation programme with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre to strengthen our strategic border-management programme to counter the threat of terrorism.

Jamaica is committed to the global partnership to prevent acts of terror and violent extremism and remains resolute in its stance against terrorism in all areas and against persons who pose a threat to international peace and security. Recognizing our susceptibility to that threat, we have been building out our national counter-terrorism architecture by establishing cohesive legislative and operational systems. At the regional level, we will continue to partner with other CARICOM member States to build resilience to extremist ideology and ensure a safe and free Caribbean region.

Jamaica is a proud party to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has served as a model for the creation of other nuclear-weapon-free zones. We therefore welcome the important step taken towards the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The adoption of a political declaration by Member States at the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction is a demonstration to the international community of our political will, renewed commitment and determination to achieve that objective. Like Secretary-General Guterres, we believe that the realization of such a zone would be of significant

value to disarmament and non-proliferation efforts and to regional and international peace and security.

Jamaica reaffirms its strong commitment to the aim of total disarmament, in line with the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In that regard, Jamaica looks forward to participating in the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty no later than April 2021. We also call on States that have not yet done so to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We have made a commitment to ratifying that Treaty in the shortest possible time and we intend to fulfil that commitment. We reaffirm the vital importance and urgency of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and urge the countries whose ratifications are necessary for its entry into force to sign and ratify it without further delay.

The slow rate of progress in implementing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agreements is worrisome. The non-resumption of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament is a major concern for my country. We are also gravely concerned about the ongoing reliance on and prevalence of nuclear weapons as a feature of defence, security and military doctrines, evidenced by the continued increase in global military spending. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research reports that global military expenditure saw its largest annual increase in a decade, reaching a total of \$1.9 billion in 2019. Now more than ever is an opportune time to redirect portions of those funds to assist global development initiatives and poverty-eradication strategies. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's continued efforts to facilitate dialogue among Member States through engagement in formal and informal settings, with the hope that it will lead to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We remain deeply disappointed about the inability of the United Nations Disarmament Commission to formally convene a meeting to address issues of great importance to Member States. It is our hope that the Commission will be able to continue its work in earnest as soon as possible.

We have long acknowledged that information and communications technology plays an important role in our attainment of sustainable growth and development. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries like ours require sustained and strategic investment that will result in a digital society facilitated by Internet access provided as a right for all our citizens.

As we make that digital transition, Jamaica calls for greater cooperation with States and international organizations through the provision of capacity-building and technical assistance that will strengthen our cybersecurity infrastructure and facilitate greater participation in the global digital economy. We have advanced our legislative framework for data protection and are scaling up our cybersecurity capability. To that end, we applaud the efforts of the Organization of American States for implementing an early-warning system to assist in protecting our cyberinfrastructure. However, we are disquieted by the emerging threats occurring in the cyberdomain that international law does not address. We therefore support and encourage the creation of an internationally legally binding instrument to address the use of cyberspace.

On the issue of gender and peace and security, Jamaica supports the view that decisions on disarmament must consider the effects on both men and women. While men are most often the victims of crimes, women are increasingly becoming targets. It is also women who are often left to pick up the pieces following such devastating acts and who are most at risk of falling into poverty. Women are often emotionally and mentally scarred in the wake of such crimes. We clearly cannot create a safer world without taking one half of the world's population into consideration. We will therefore continue to express our support for this issue in the annual resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, introduced by our fellow CARICOM member State Trinidad and Tobago.

Ms. Plepytė (Lithuania): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their election and assure them of our full support during this session.

Lithuania fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2). In our national capacity, I would like to stress the following.

Today our States and societies are encountering numerous security challenges. In addition to the health crisis posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, they face continued military build-up, recurring armed conflicts and an assault on democratic freedoms. Our security is being challenged in the cyber- and information space by malign hybrid activities. Against that background, upholding the rules-based multilateral system is of crucial importance. Arms-control

agreements must be fully implemented to provide more transparency and contribute to greater stability and predictability. To do so, they should be reciprocal, verifiable and respected by all parties.

We are particularly concerned about the regional security situation in Europe. Our system of collaborative institutions and agreements centred around the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, including the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, the Vienna Document and the Open Skies Treaty, has been under pressure. There is no progress in resolving conflicts and restoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine and Georgia. The recent events in Nagorno Karabakh have demonstrated the weaknesses of existing conflict-prevention mechanisms. Lithuania is convinced that the solution can be found only on the basis of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris, including by refraining from the threat or use of force and respecting the inviolability of frontiers, the territorial integrity of States and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Implementing and complying with existing legal treaty obligations and political commitments are crucial to rebuilding trust, predictability and security in the Euro-Atlantic region.

One of the oldest and almost universally agreed norms in international law in the area of security is the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances. It is therefore difficult to comprehend that we once again need to address the issue in the twenty-first century. The re-emergence of chemical weapons and their recent use in Syria, Malaysia, the United Kingdom and Russia is one of the most urgent threats to international peace and security today and has to be dealt with firmly and collectively. There should be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons, and perpetrators, whether State or non-State actors, should be held accountable.

Lithuania strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force, as concluded in the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to the OPCW Executive Council and the Secretary-General on 8 April. Following the report, on 9 July, the Executive Council took an important decision setting a time frame and clear actions to be taken by the Syrian Arab Republic regarding its possession and use of chemical weapons. We regret to note that Syria has not fulfilled its obligations. We

urge the Syrian Government to cooperate in good faith with the OPCW and live up to full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We continue to lend our full support to the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, along with the OPCW teams, and remain fully confident in their professionalism and impartiality on the matter.

Lithuania condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the attack on Alexei Navalny using a nerve agent from the banned Novichok group, as the OPCW has confirmed on the basis of analysis conducted in two of its designated laboratories, as well as by three independent laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden. That assassination attempt, which took place on the territory of the Russian Federation, is a clear violation of the Convention and international law. We fully support the OPCW's role in the investigation of the case, while calling on the Russian Federation to be fully transparent and immediately disclose any information relevant to the OPCW's work.

We are dismayed by the repeated attempts to challenge the authority and integrity of the OPCW, which is fulfilling its duty to serve the international community by conducting objective and impartial investigations that help fight impunity in the use of chemical weapons. Lithuania strongly supports the Secretary-General's International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, which has successfully proved its ability to conduct an impartial international investigation into the use of chemical weapons in Syria and is currently the only independent international instrument for investigating alleged uses of biological weapons. Any attempts to compromise its integrity, independence and efficiency are completely unacceptable. We expect all States to reaffirm their strong political commitment to upholding the norms of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and their related annual resolutions during the current First Committee session.

We look forward to the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and hope that it will be successfully conducted despite the circumstances surrounding the pandemic. We support the NPT as the cornerstone for global nuclear disarmament. With its three pillars, it remains a

fundamental international mechanism contributing to global peace, security and stability.

As a non-nuclear-weapon State, Lithuania reiterates its support for an inclusive and gradual approach to nuclear disarmament and meaningful steps towards creating an environment conducive to further nuclear disarmament negotiations aimed at achieving a world without nuclear weapons. Lithuania strongly believes that reciprocal and verifiable treaty-based nuclear arms control, reflecting the existing security environment, can contribute to international security and stability. We support ongoing strategic stability talks and efforts to reinvigorate nuclear arms controls under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, including on all types of nuclear weapons, along with the strengthening of verification mechanisms. We call on China to positively consider the invitation to join the strategic stability dialogue with the United States and Russia in order to upgrade the nuclear arms-control architecture for the next few decades to come.

We reiterate our strong commitment to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and call on nations to respect their obligations and commitments in this field.

Mr. Pildegovičs (Latvia): As this is the first time I am taking the floor, I would like to congratulate the Chair on his election to lead the First Committee and to assure him of the full cooperation of the Latvian delegation under these unprecedented circumstances.

Latvia fully subscribes to the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (EU) last week (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

Let me start our national statement by expressing solidarity with those who have lost their loved ones due to the pandemic. The crisis has demonstrated how interconnected we are, and Latvia therefore responded quickly to the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire. Latvia strongly believes in a rules-based international order, with multilateralism as its guiding principle and the United Nations at its core, rooted in respect for international law. Despite the understandable postponement of many disarmament and non-proliferation events, Latvia underlines that those important meetings should take place as soon as possible and as health and safety measures allow.

Latvia reaffirms its long-standing commitment to verifiable and effective treaty-based nuclear arms

control and disarmament. As we do not operate in a political vacuum, Latvia continues to believe that the right way forward lies in a progressive approach to nuclear disarmament. Given the heightened tensions, we should be careful not to enter on a path of a new arms race that would negate the significant reductions achieved after the end of the Cold War. Our ultimate goal — a world without nuclear weapons — remains unchanged. The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty should be extended, as it plays an important role in global security, limiting the number of strategic nuclear weapons. We encourage Russia and the United States to continue their discussions, and we believe that China should join them.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which marked its fiftieth anniversary this year, remains the singular accomplishment and cornerstone of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Achieving full implementation of the Treaty requires the active support of States parties. It is therefore essential to hold review conferences for meaningful and enduring commitments and for finding space for compromises and shared goals. Much has been accomplished in the past 50 years, but much more remains to be done and serious challenges still exist. The ambitious agenda we set in 2010 has not lost any relevance today. The comprehensive implementation of the Action Plan is the correct path forward. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty are two long-standing necessities in that regard. It is of the utmost importance that no more nuclear tests be conducted. The CTBT's entry into force is central to ensuring that. It is not only a political imperative, it is a concrete contribution to strengthening international peace and security. We therefore call for the universalization of that important Treaty and express our hope that the remaining annex 2 countries, on which the entry into force of the Treaty depends, will do what is necessary.

The nuclear-weapon programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains an unacceptable violation of international law and NPT obligations, despite all diplomatic efforts. In that regard, Latvia expresses its strong support for the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Latvia also remains committed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and supports its continued implementation. We call on Iran to

stay true to its commitments under the JCPOA and maintain its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We should remain highly vigilant about other threats of mass destruction. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is a fundamental part of international law and security. It serves to ensure the safety of all humankind from the singular threat posed by biological agents. Yet it still suffers from a persistent lack of funding and attention and requires further efforts for its complete universalization. It is also deeply disturbing that more than 20 years after the Chemical Weapons Convention's entry into force, we are still witnessing the use of chemical weapons in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia, the United Kingdom and, recently, in Russia. We are deeply concerned about the attempts of certain States to challenge the authority of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and undermine existing mechanisms for investigation into alleged uses of chemical and biological weapons. The use of such weapons is completely unacceptable under any circumstances. Latvia condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force, as was concluded in the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team this year.

Latvia also expresses its outrage about the poisoning in his homeland of Russia's top opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, using a military chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group. The international community should not tolerate such heinous threats to international peace and security, which manifestly violate fundamental principles of international law. We call for accountability, prompt investigation and justice for those crimes. Latvia joined the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons precisely because their use is unacceptable and must have consequences. In that regard, Latvia also supports the EU autonomous sanctions regime specifically designed to fight the proliferation of chemical weapons and their precursors.

The Secretary-General has noted that the pandemic has only reinforced already-existing human suffering in various parts of the world. The International Committee of the Red Cross has confirmed it, through its witnessing of the misery that has been caused by the widespread proliferation of arms that, compounded by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, presents a dramatic threat to human lives in war-torn countries. Latvia therefore highlights the importance

of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) as an effective instrument for preventing and eradicating the illicit arms trade. It is also the first agreement to address the link between conventional arms transfers and the risk of gender-based violence. We are pleased that since Latvia presided over the Conference of States Parties to the Treaty in 2019, a robust action plan on gender and gender-based violence has been adopted. We are grateful to the Argentine presidency for its diligent efforts in organizing the sixth Conference of States Parties, despite the current circumstances. Latvia believes that universalizing the Treaty is key to a world without the violence caused by the unsanctioned circulation of arms. With that in mind, Latvia co-chaired the Working Group on Treaty Universalization this year and welcomes the new additions to the ATT since the last Conference — Afghanistan, China, Maldives, Namibia, Niue and Sao Tome and Principe.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined our reliance on information and communications technologies (ICTs). International organizations, Government institutions, the private sector and education systems had to adjust to work remotely. With those challenges, new digital solutions and tools emerged in different parts of the world. Simultaneously, the global society experienced a distressing rise in the scope and severity of the malicious use of ICTs by States and non-State actors. Even organizations such as the World Health Organization and the International Maritime Organization, as well as education and health-care systems, have been the target of cyberattacks. In that context, Latvia underlines the importance of an open, free, stable and secure cyberspace, where human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and international law are respected and upheld. They will continue to be our guiding principles during the ongoing discussions on cybersecurity. Latvia is grateful to the Chairs of 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 for their efforts to ensure a constructive and complementary approach by both Groups. We hope that two consensus-based outcome documents will be concluded next year.

As we mark the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), Latvia expresses its strong support for the implementation of the women

and peace and security agenda, while stressing the close link between global security and the equal participation of women. We need to put the greatest possible effort into lessening the disparity between women affected by conflict and the role assigned to women in conflict prevention and resolution.

International rules are a safeguard for everyone, not a constraint. Multilateral diplomacy is needed to tackle the rise of new threats and deliver benefits to people around the world. Let me therefore finish with a quote from John F. Kennedy's speech to the General Assembly in 1963, "It is never too early to try; it is never too late to talk". (*A/PV.1209, p.5*).

Ms. Flores Irachez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of Honduras, allow me to congratulate the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their election to guide the work of the First Committee, especially in the unusual circumstances created by the coronavirus disease pandemic. I would like to take this opportunity to assure them of my delegation's full support in our efforts to achieve the best outcome from our deliberations.

Like other Member States, Honduras aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and Nicaragua, on behalf of the members of the Central American Integration System (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

During this seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, we have witnessed the vital importance of international cooperation through multilateralism. Honduras reaffirms its commitment to the Organization to continue working for general and complete disarmament, non-proliferation and international agreements on disarmament and arms control with a view to maintaining peace and collective security for the benefit of all humankind. Honduras is concerned about the increase in military spending and believes that the money could instead be used for the common good in the areas of health, education, migration and poverty eradication and to honour commitments to meeting the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As a founding member of the Organization, Honduras understands the importance of the provisions of Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, which explicitly states that we must maintain international peace and security and, to that end, take effective collective measures through peaceful means and

in conformity with the principles of justice and international law.

Honduras has historically consistently affirmed its commitment to disarmament by adhering to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty. Honduras is also proud to be a member of the Latin American region that constitutes the nuclear-weapon-free zone created by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The zone helps underscore our contribution to the rejection of weapons of mass destruction and provides a solid basis for the development of a universal ban on nuclear weapons.

It is also a source of great satisfaction for my country that it is a signatory to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which has already been ratified by our National Congress, and we expect to deposit our instrument of ratification in the near future. That commitment on the part of Honduras, in signing and ratifying the Treaty, means that we will continue to support the efforts of the community of nations to reduce the number of such weapons and towards the gradual establishment of ever-broader geographic regions free of nuclear weapons. We strongly believe that it will strengthen the global norm against the use and stockpiling of these weapons of mass destruction.

The imminent risk posed by the possible use or threat of use of nuclear weapons undermines the main objective of the First Committee. The only way to eliminate the risk posed by nuclear weapons is by totally eliminating them. We are opposed to upgrades to existing nuclear weapons and to the development of new kinds of weapons, and we reiterate the need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies.

As we mark the seventy-fifth year since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we reiterate the call to all countries to commit to using nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes and scientific cooperation and, by extension, to preventing tragedies of the magnitude suffered during the Second World War.

We also acknowledge the importance of the continuing threat posed by illicit conventional arms markets and the wide range of humanitarian,

socioeconomic and security consequences arising from the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons. In line with the provisions of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and with our efforts to underscore the need to prevent and eliminate the illicit trafficking of conventional arms and prevent their diversion to the illicit market and to unauthorized uses and end users, in early 2019 Honduras's National Congress enacted a new law on the control of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials. The objective is to strive at the local, national, regional and international levels to put an end to a scourge that plunges thousands of families across the world into mourning. We call for a balanced, transparent and objective application of the relevant international instruments. We reiterate that international assistance and cooperation are crucial to ensuring the successful implementation of the Programme of Action and our national legislation in this area.

We attach great importance to the prevention of an arms race in outer space and support the use of outer space for peaceful purposes only. We must keep in mind that to overcome the current challenges we need greater international cooperation, strengthened multilateral institutions and better global governance.

We support the strengthening of international standards applicable to States in the area of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, promoting actions and strategies to strengthen cybersecurity and prevent cybercrime and attacks and creating a secure, stable, accessible and peaceful space.

Lastly, it will be vital to increase the transfer of technology, experience-sharing and the training of competent officials. Developing countries have limited resources and insufficient institutional structures to overcome the challenges we face. We would like to highlight the important work being done by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the assistance provided to countries in the region in implementing disarmament measures in various areas. At the same time, we thank the various disarmament agencies of the United Nations system for all their efforts. Honduras remains firmly committed to the work of the First Committee to strengthen international peace and security.

Mr. Skoknic Tapia (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by congratulating the Ambassador of Spain on his election as Chair of the First Committee and wishing all the members of the Bureau every success in the Committee's work this year. We reiterate our firm commitment to making an active and positive contribution to the outcome of our deliberations.

Chile firmly believes that a world without weapons of mass destruction is possible and that maintaining international peace and security without using such weapons, besides being an ethical imperative, is an attainable goal and in line with the international system for the protection of human rights. That is why our country is firmly committed to multilateral efforts towards disarmament and non-proliferation and continues to work to improve its legal and regulatory norms aimed at preventing the diversion of sensitive materials for the development and production of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. An important milestone in that regard, and a clear demonstration of our commitment to non-proliferation, is Chile's recent enactment of a law implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. Our country's commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation is clear, as evidenced by Chile's signing of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the last remaining category of weapons of mass destruction not explicitly banned under a legally binding instrument. It represents a promising path to the common goal of a nuclear-weapon-free planet by strengthening and complementing the current legal architecture around the issue.

We reiterate that Chile is of the view that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We stress the importance of achieving its universalization and the balanced implementation of the three pillars of its basic structure — that is, disarmament, non-proliferation and the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In that regard, we hope that the next Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, postponed owing to the health crisis, can be held in early 2021, if conditions permit.

Chile reaffirms its commitment to supporting multilateral efforts on disarmament, non-proliferation and the prohibition of the use and possession of all weapons of mass destruction. Along with condemning

the military use of biological and chemical weapons in all circumstances, we call for universal adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention as we strive to achieve a world free of chemical weapons.

We acknowledge that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition is a scourge with immeasurably destructive effects that go beyond the realm of international security to have a direct impact on socioeconomic development and human rights and exacerbate sexual and gender-based violence for millions. It is therefore a matter of urgency for the international community to act in concert to address the issue. As proof of Chile's commitment to the issue, in May 2018 we deposited our instrument of ratification to the Arms Trade Treaty, thereby cooperating with the effective regulation of the transnational trade in conventional arms. We also convened an inter-institutional round table on arms trafficking to ensure the full implementation of our international commitments in that area, especially under the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

As a public good that offers benefits in various areas, cyberspace also demands that we assume major responsibilities with regard to its risks, in particular given its global and cross-border nature. That is why international cooperation and a collective approach in that area are essential to keeping cyberspace free, open and secure. Chile reiterates that international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, together with the Charter of the United Nations, also apply fully to cyberspace. Our country therefore affirms its support for efforts in the area of information and communications technology, in the work of 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, trusting that both processes will be mutually reinforcing and thereby enable a consensus to be found to help protect the rights of individuals and regulate States' conduct in cyberspace.

I would like to mention Chile's successful humanitarian demining work, which was completed this year. All minefields on Chilean territory were cleared, numbering 200 areas altogether in which 180,000 — I repeat 180,000 — landmines were destroyed

and more than 27 million square meters were cleared. Our country thanks all those States and civil-society organizations that supported those arduous efforts, which we are proud to highlight today. Our country has thereby honoured the commitment it made in 1997 upon signing the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Today, Chile even spearheads international efforts and cooperates with other countries in the training and transfer of knowledge and experience in humanitarian demining operations. I reiterate our willingness to continue cooperating in those efforts.

In conclusion, Chile reaffirms that it is and has always been a firm supporter and advocate of general and complete disarmament and always welcomes debate on the issue in a broad, transparent and democratic multilateral space, in line with its foreign policy. We call on the international community to make a commitment to harnessing its political will and creating the climate of mutual trust we need to make progress on disarmament issues. Members can count on our commitment to making a positive contribution to the success of the work of the First Committee.

The Acting Chair: I now invite the Committee to view a pre-recorded statement by the representative of Brunei Darussalam.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the conference room.

Mrs. Kocyigit Grba (Turkey): I would like to add my voice to those of previous speakers and to congratulate the Chair of the Committee and the other members of the Bureau on their election.

As we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, the challenges to multilateralism remain tremendous. The deteriorating security environment, as well as the continued erosion of the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, is a matter of great concern. Trust among various parties has further eroded. Important arms-control instruments have either become defunct or hang in the balance. The use of chemical weapons has resurfaced with no accountability.

Another deeply worrying development is an increasing disregard for international humanitarian law in conflict zones, as evidenced by Armenia's recent breach of the ceasefire in Nagorno Karabakh.

Within hours of the signing of the ceasefire agreement, Armenian armed forces launched long-range rockets, once again targeting civilian settlements and infrastructure deep into Azerbaijan, in stark violation of the Geneva Conventions. In one of those attacks, a residential apartment in Ganja, the second largest city in Azerbaijan, 100 kilometres from the conflict zone, was hit early in the morning of 11 October, killing 10 civilians and injuring 37, including children. On 14 October, the deliberate shelling of civilians in several districts in Azerbaijan continued, causing civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian property. The situation only emphasizes our duty to reverse our current course and end the divisions in the area of disarmament. In that regard, we call on all States to uphold international norms, fully implement their obligations and commitments, restore dialogue and trust and promote transparency and confidence-building measures.

Turkey supports strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) across its three pillars and achieving its universalization. We appeal to all States parties to implement their Treaty obligations and commitments in full and as undertaken at the various Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Turkey supports systematic, progressive, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament and encourages all States possessing nuclear weapons to take further steps in that direction. We look forward to the convening of the tenth Review Conference, postponed due to the coronavirus disease pandemic, and we are ready to work to achieve its successful outcome. Turkey commends the work of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of nuclear verification in advancing nuclear disarmament and looks forward to further discussions through the new Group of Experts during 2021 and 2022. Work must be done to make tangible progress towards the full implementation of article VI of the NPT, with the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We would like to emphasize the special responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States with the largest arsenals.

We welcome the strategic stability dialogue between the Russian Federation and the United States and hope it will culminate in an extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. We also encourage building on the Treaty for broader arrangements and further reductions in the future with extended participation.

We support the ongoing work and dialogue through the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative. Turkey is part of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, which is committed to actively contributing to the NPT Review Conference, especially by presenting recommendations for strengthening the implementation of the NPT based on the 2010 Action Plan.

Turkey strongly supports the inalienable right of States to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in line with article IV of the NPT. By administering international nuclear safeguards in accordance with the NPT, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is pivotal in the non-proliferation regime. It also has a leading role in strengthening the international nuclear security framework. We consider the Agency's safety standards vital and we follow its recommendations.

Turkey reaffirms its strong support for progress on the 1995 resolution on convening a conference on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We take note of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which took place in November 2019 in New York, and hope that the process will serve its purpose with the eventual participation of all the relevant parties.

We reiterate the centrality of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as the vital importance of its early entry into force. We once again encourage all States, in particular the remaining annex 2 States, to sign and ratify it as soon as possible.

Turkey stresses its continued support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). We are concerned about the current fragile status of the JCPOA and call on all the parties to fulfil their obligations and refrain from activities that are inconsistent with their commitments. A return to the full implementation of the Plan is vital to regional and international security, as well as the non-proliferation regime. We commend the role of the IAEA and encourage robust cooperation between Iran and the Agency.

Turkey supports a diplomatic solution to the problem of the nuclear and ballistic-missile programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We expect a return to dialogue and negotiations between the parties. We fully support the complete, verifiable

and irreversible denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is key to achieving sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula. We also urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the CTBT as soon as possible. Another priority for Turkey is the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

Turkey reiterates that the use of chemical weapons is a crime against humanity. We condemn in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. The case of Syria remains a matter of particular concern in that regard. We welcomed the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team, issued in April 2020, which established the responsibility of the Syrian regime's air force in three chemical-weapon attacks that took place in Ltamenah in March 2017. We consider that report an important step towards ensuring that those responsible for such attacks in Syria are held accountable for their crimes. In that regard, we continue to support the cooperation between the secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. We also commend the ongoing work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which continues to contribute substantively to investigating the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We stress once again our confidence in the professionalism, independence and impartiality of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission. The Syrian regime should fully cooperate with the OPCW regarding its chemical-weapon programme and stockpiles and fulfil its obligations pursuant to the Chemical Weapons Convention and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems continues to endanger international security. The risk of non-State actors' acquisition of such weapons is a matter of deep concern. Turkey attaches great importance to the collective efforts aimed at reversing this alarming trend. Another priority area is strengthening international cooperation in the field of conventional weapons. Turkey is committed to the effective implementation and strengthening of the

Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument. The Arms Trade Treaty is also an important instrument in that area. Turkey is a member of all four export-control regimes and diligently implements a robust export-control mechanism.

The Ottawa Convention is the cornerstone of international efforts to end casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. Turkey takes its commitments under the Convention very seriously and is determined to fulfil all of them. We are also fully implementing the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and encourage adherence to that fundamental international regime. The serious problems created by the use of instruments such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and lethal autonomous weapons systems continue. Turkey is concerned about the increasing impact of IED attacks worldwide, in particular through terrorist acts. We believe that the United Nations has an important role to play in addressing such threats.

The exploration and use of outer space solely for peaceful purposes is a key priority for us. We believe that peace and security in the cosmos can be achieved only by preventing an arms race in outer space. We must increase international cooperation and establish standards of responsible State behaviour. Transparency and confidence-building measures are also important to reducing risks in outer space.

Turkey supports a free, stable, accessible and secure cyberspace. We are concerned about the fact that cyberthreats are increasing in number, complexity and severity.

In the circumstances, it is essential that we adopt an understanding of security based on cooperation. Enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations disarmament machinery should be our common priority. Turkey reiterates its support for the three complementary pillars of that machinery, the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

Ms. Challenger (Antigua and Barbuda): I would like to begin by congratulating the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their election to preside over the work of the First Committee during the seventy-fifth session. They can be assured of the full support of Antigua and Barbuda. We also want to express our gratitude to the Chair and Bureau of the Committee in

the seventy-fourth session for their tireless efforts to steadily guide its work.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Trinidad and Tobago, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

It is an understatement to say that we are living in unprecedented times. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has blanketed the priorities of every State Member of the United Nations in a myriad of ways. The global crisis has highlighted the fundamental truth that we need to collaborate and support one another in order to face and tackle shared challenges. That analogy can also be used to confront many of the critical challenges addressed by the First Committee. We must seek global peace and security, based on our collective benefit, and reject divisive narratives. We also call on Member States to move beyond broad statements and towards tangible commitments to peace and security for the benefit of all.

As an example, Antigua and Barbuda is deeply concerned about the devastating impact of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Every year we repeat the refrain that the countries of the Caribbean region are not manufacturers or significant importers of small arms and ammunition. However, we continue to experience the increased use of those weapons, resulting in violence among our citizens and bringing harm and suffering to our communities. We need to adjust the thrust of our consideration in the work of the Committee towards the armed violence experienced in societies all over the world. That includes violence involving armed gangs, organized crime and gender-based violence.

It is with that in mind that Antigua and Barbuda is a sponsor of the biennial resolution submitted by Trinidad and Tobago on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, which recognizes the pivotal role of women in efforts to address global peace and security. We urge all Member States to continue to support that critical resolution. It provides an essential link between disarmament and issues that must be addressed if our work is to have an impact on the lives of the people in our communities. The tangible solution to that is to ensure that the crucial instruments that address the trade in and misuse of small arms and light weapons, including the United Nations Programme of Action

to Reduce, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects and the Arms Trade Treaty, must fully reflect the problems of armed violence in all its forms. Antigua and Barbuda will continue to raise the issue, and we look forward to having the support of the international community as we acknowledge the importance of addressing pervasive influxes of small arms and light weapons, while recognizing that the vast majority of deaths and injuries due to the use of small arms and light weapons occur in situations of violence and crime rather than armed conflict.

As we are still in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can see everywhere that its immense impact, in lockdowns, job insecurity and strained social services, causes an increase in armed violence. The effect of this period on the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and on national development has yet to be fully observed, but we can imagine that the impact will be severe.

Since the adoption of the SDGs the disarmament community has shown increased interest in development and in how reducing armed violence and related insecurity can be a catalyst for achieving the Goals and their targets. Target 16.4 seeks to reduce illicit arms flows significantly through efforts that could be accompanied by robust implementation of the Programme of Action or the Arms Trade Treaty. Tangible steps that can be taken include concerted efforts to remove the silos between the discussions on development and disarmament. Antigua and Barbuda is well aware of the mounting opportunity costs of spending on national and regional security and the devastating impact and resulting violence throughout the region of the trade in small arms and light weapons.

Regarding nuclear weapons, as highlighted by my Prime Minister during the high-level plenary meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons in September, it is clear to the people of Antigua and Barbuda that any assessment of the impact of nuclear weapons provides unassailable proof that such weapons cause loss of life and displacement on a catastrophic scale. That destruction also leads to permanent harm to people's health and the environment and is irreparably damaging to socioeconomic development and the social order. Furthermore, as a small island developing State (SIDS), we are very aware that our strategic location,

porous marine borders and socioeconomic realities make us a potential soft threat.

Tangible and significant efforts that can be made in that regard include the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Progress remains slow, but we trust that that essential Treaty will soon be ratified. In addition, we are less than a handful of States away from the imminent entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Antigua and Barbuda was proud to ratify the Treaty last year and continues to urge all Member States to do the same. Furthermore, the delayed convening of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has presented us with an opportunity to ensure that the consensus that eluded the 2015 Review Conference will not carry over to the next. We are confident that we will be able to adopt robust recommendations that will uphold the principles that have governed nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Antigua and Barbuda has been very pleased to work with the international community on a broad variety of issues related to disarmament and international security. Most recently, we collaborated with the Arms Trade Treaty Voluntary Trust Fund to host a regional workshop to coordinate on regional reporting and implementation. We have benefited from support from the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly through coordinated support to CARICOM. We also signed our first-ever country programme framework for 2018 to 2023 with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Chair took the Chair.

We have also benefited from bilateral agreements and support from many of our development partners and we are grateful for that. Those tangible expressions of assistance, whether through technology transfer, training, project funding or otherwise, are the only way to bridge capacity gaps that may allow weaknesses to persist with potentially devastating consequences.

In conclusion, Antigua and Barbuda stands with the international community as we recognize and reinforce the specific ways in which disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control can advance global peace and security as well as the achievement of the SDGs. We also look forward to more engagement and collaboration with SIDS and other under-represented

member States in those discussions as we work towards the future we want, ensuring that no one is left behind.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite the Committee to view a pre-recorded statement by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the conference room.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): Allow me to assure you, Sir, of my delegation's full support and cooperation in the work of the Committee.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2), but we would also like to highlight some issues in our national capacity.

Celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations this year gives us an opportunity to reflect. For Estonia, the United Nations is the best possible forum for addressing global issues, from peace and security to new emerging threats. The United Nations gives everyone a voice. We believe that commonly agreed international rules and effective and inclusive global institutions are essential to ensuring peace, security, human rights, prosperity and sustainable development. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has vividly demonstrated that we need effective multilateralism, with a strong United Nations at its core, to be able to address current and future challenges in a coordinated way.

The First Committee is meeting in a challenging international security environment. There are several worrying developments that require that we make concerted efforts to uphold and strengthen the international rules-based arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

One of the most worrisome developments is the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons. In recent years, chemical weapons have been used in Syria, Malaysia, the United Kingdom and now in Russia. Estonia strongly condemns the use of a military chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group to poison the Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. The use of a nerve agent has been confirmed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and three independent national laboratories. That is a matter of the utmost concern for the international community, since the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is not

acceptable and poses a threat to international peace and security. We call on the Russian Federation's authorities to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation and to bring those responsible to justice.

Earlier this year, the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team confirmed in its first report that in three instances in 2017 the Syrian regime had used the chemical agents sarin and chlorine against its people. Those grave violations of international law must have serious consequences. Impunity will allow the norm against the use of chemical weapons to erode. Estonia reiterates its full confidence in the professionalism, impartiality and independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its investigative mechanisms. Deliberate efforts to discredit the OPCW and undermine its authority are regrettable and unacceptable.

This year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The NPT remains a cornerstone of the global efforts to pursue nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Considering the NPT's achievements and the significant contribution it has made to international peace, security and stability, it is crucial to reinforce the Treaty's viability and further strengthen its role as a major multilateral instrument of international security. We hope that the circumstances will allow for holding the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons at the earliest possible date and that a constructive and good faith engagement from all States parties will enable a successful outcome. Estonia shares the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons and continues to advocate for a progressive approach, pursued in a realistic and responsible way.

Estonia welcomes the strategic stability dialogue between the Russian Federation and the United States and hopes it will lead to an extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, as well as to negotiations of broader follow-on agreements. We urge China to contribute actively to the process.

We regret that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has still not entered into force. We support all international efforts towards that end and urge all States, particularly annex 2 countries, to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay. We note with concern that the proliferation of ballistic missiles, especially those capable of delivering nuclear

weapons, remains a serious challenge. In that regard, we believe that the Missile Technology Control Regime and The Hague Code of Conduct play an important role in preventing missile proliferation. Estonia also supports the commencement of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Estonia continues to support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the long-term mission of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of verifying and monitoring Iran's nuclear-related commitments. We strongly urge Iran to refrain from any further actions that are inconsistent with its JCPOA commitments and return to full compliance with the agreement. The role of the IAEA system of safeguards in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and promoting the responsible development of peaceful applications of nuclear technology is essential. We urge Iran to continue collaborating with the Agency in resolving all pending questions regarding its safeguards obligations.

We are concerned about the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to develop its missiles and nuclear weapons programme in violation of Security Council resolutions. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from provocations and take concrete steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. Until then, the sanctions must remain in place and fully implemented.

Estonia continues to advance global understanding of the cyber stability framework through its active engagement in the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security and the Group of Governmental Experts on advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security. Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the two processes have already enhanced the global understanding of the cyber stability framework. We hope that the two consensus reports that will emerge from those two processes in 2021 will provide further guidance on how to implement the framework. Estonia strongly supports continuing the discussions on cybersecurity in the First Committee after the successful conclusion of the two processes. The already agreed-on voluntary norms of responsible State behaviour, together with the applicability of existing international

law, regional confidence-building measures and capacity-building mechanisms, provide the structure we need for an open, free and secure cyberspace where fundamental freedoms and human rights are protected.

In conclusion, Estonia is determined to contribute to the global efforts to strengthen international law, the rules-based order and the implementation of existing disarmament, arms-control and non-proliferation instruments. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period from 2020 to 2021, Estonia is demonstrating its long-term commitment to taking on more responsibility in promoting international peace and security.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite the Committee to view a pre-recorded statement by the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the conference room.

Mr. Jinga (Romania) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election to preside over the First Committee. You have my country's full support.

Romania aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2), and I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

This year's session of the First Committee is taking place in unprecedented circumstances that should nonetheless not prevent us from stepping up our efforts to find the best solutions to the current challenges of international peace and security. The international non-proliferation, arms-control and disarmament architecture is under pressure and new challenges continue to emerge. However, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania said at the recent meeting of the Alliance for Multilateralism, these challenging times are a wake-up call for all of us who have faith in multilateralism, international law and the rules-based order. Romania continues to believe firmly in the effectiveness of multilateralism and international cooperation, and we call for further progress on all aspects of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Romania reaffirms its firm and constant support to the NPT as the foundation of the global

international regime of nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the promotion of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The universalization and implementation of that vital multilateral instrument are key to international peace, security and stability. Romania stands ready to work with its partners to ensure a successful tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons when that proves possible and as the coronavirus disease pandemic allows.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight, as a contribution to the implementation of the NPT, Romania's efforts to ensure the success of the high-level International Conference on Nuclear Security: Sustaining and Strengthening Efforts, which was held in Vienna from 10 to 14 February, and the adoption by consensus of a ministerial declaration. Together with Panama, Romania co-chaired the complex process of negotiations for a meaningful political ministerial declaration that looks to the future, as well as the work of the Ministerial Conference. Those efforts are proof of our commitment to multilateralism and a strengthened global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Romania also reaffirms its support for the entry into force and universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as for an immediate start to negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material cut-off treaty, in accordance with the Conference's report CD/1299 and the mandate it contains, as the logical next step in advancing nuclear disarmament and preventing proliferation.

The proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons remains a systemic threat to the social and economic development of many Member States. Romania reaffirms its commitment to the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument, as well as to the outcome of the Programme of Action's third Review Conference.

The International Atomic Energy Agency's comprehensive safeguards system plays a major role in strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We have a common interest founded on the maintenance and support of a system of efficient and effective guarantees as an inalienable part of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture. Romania will

continue to call for the immediate universalization of the comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols.

The pursuit of good-faith strategic arms-control negotiations is also essential to international security. We welcome the recent discussions in Vienna and Helsinki on the issue and point to the substantial proposal that the United States has submitted as a basis for extending the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. An extension with a framework that includes China's potential participation would also be desirable. Romania remains deeply concerned about the disregard and shortcomings demonstrated by some States in honouring their international obligations. We continue to call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take tangible and credible measures to build trust and abandon all its nuclear weapons and ballistic-missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. We also stress the crucial need to maintain the full and strict implementation of commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Romania supports the activity of the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and expresses confidence in its objectivity and impartiality. We strongly oppose any attempt to undermine the OPCW's credibility and integrity and once again express our strong support for the work of its Director-General and Technical Secretariat in their complex efforts to make progress on achieving the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm my country's determination to contribute actively to all efforts aimed at strengthening the international security architecture.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): At the outset, I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating you, Mr. Chair, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee, along with the rest of the Bureau. I want to assure you of my delegation's full support.

We are deeply concerned about the fact that even during these unprecedented times of pandemic and despite the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, the security environment continues to deteriorate and international and regional tensions are on the rise. That has grave consequences for the international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and can easily spiral into an arms race, conflict and violence. Now more than ever, therefore, it

is of the utmost importance that all parties contribute to our arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes, enhance global security and avoid erosion of the rules-based multilateral system. Unconditional compliance with obligations under the relevant international arrangements, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and Security Council resolutions, must stand out as main priorities for the international community.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is the key multilateral instrument for international peace, security and stability. We must promote its universalization and enhance its implementation. Georgia supports all three pillars of the NPT and will continue to promote the comprehensive, balanced and full implementation of the Action Plan of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Unfortunately, the 2020 Review Conference has been postponed due to the pandemic. Considering the ongoing situation with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we hope that it will take place next year. We need to focus on its successful outcome.

Georgia reiterates its full confidence in the verification regime of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We call on all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay. The early entry into force and universalization of the CTBT should be a top priority for us all.

Georgia remains committed to the full, universal, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The use of chemical weapons, including any type of toxic chemicals, by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, is abhorrent and a grave violation of international law for which the perpetrators must be held accountable. We condemn the attempt to assassinate the Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned by a military chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group, as has been confirmed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and three independent specialized laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden. Let me reiterate our full confidence in the technical expertise, objectivity, impartiality and

independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its Investigation and Identification Team.

Preventing and responding to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear threats is one of the main focuses of State security in my country. Georgia pays particular attention to the fight against the illicit trafficking of substances and materials in these areas and is among the leaders in Eastern Europe for its achievements in the reduction of such threats. As the Committee is well aware, the occupied regions of Georgia can be considered a security challenge on many fronts. But in this particular context, we have recorded multiple attempts to smuggle nuclear and radioactive materials through those regions. As a result of effective work on the part of Georgian law-enforcement agencies, those illegal activities have been duly prevented. However, in the absence of an international presence in Georgia's occupied territories, it has become virtually impossible to conduct any type of verification activities on the ground.

In the past few years, information and communications technologies have been increasingly used for purposes that are inconsistent with international peace and security. Georgia has a long and painful experience of dealing with such threats. Russia has waged hybrid warfare on Georgia since the early 1990s and has never ceased trying to undermine my country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as its European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations. On 28 October last year, a large-scale cyberattack was launched against websites, servers and other operating systems of our Government, State bodies, media outlets and private-sector organizations. The investigation conducted by the Georgian authorities, in cooperation with our partners, concluded that the cyberattack was planned and executed by the Main Division of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

Regrettably, even now as the international community is fighting COVID-19, the Russian Federation is trying to gain political dividends by intensifying its propaganda war on one of Georgia's most successful institutions in the fight against the spread of the coronavirus, the Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research. In that context, I would like to emphasize the very recent cyberattack on the Center and on the Georgian Health Ministry's computer system. We have already asked our partners for assistance in that investigation and hope to be able to disclose details of this grave case soon.

The military conflicts in my region are still unresolved and on the rise. The Black Sea is particularly exposed to a threatening wave of militarization, in flagrant violation of international law. The Russian Federation's acts of military aggression against Georgia and Ukraine represent a fundamental threat that endangers not only our countries but wider European security as well. Russia's illegal military bases in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali are equipped with contemporary and sophisticated offensive weaponry, including tanks, various armoured vehicles, rocket launch systems, as well as SA and SS missile systems of the SA-10 Grumble and SS-21 Scarab. The force structure and posture of those deployments go beyond defensive objectives and serve to project power across the entire Black Sea region and the Mediterranean.

In parallel, the Russian Federation conducts regular military drills in occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali as part of the exercises of its Southern Military District. In that context, I would like to touch on a recent such exercise, the Caucasus 2020, held from 21 to 26 September. We strongly object to Russia's military exercises in the occupied territories of Georgia with the participation of the Russian military bases stationed in those regions without the host nation's consent. Russia's ongoing occupation of those regions of Georgia, as well as its active militarization and military exercises conducted there, violate fundamental norms of international law and the Helsinki Final Act, as well as Russia's obligations under the European Union-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008.

Once again, we strongly condemn the conduct of the military exercises in the occupied territories of Georgia and call on Russia to implement the commitments it signed up to. We also call on the international community to properly assess yet another illegal activity of the Russian Federation.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): We will now hear from delegations that have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For the past few days, including today, we have heard a great deal of speculation about the so-called attempt on the life of the Russian blogger Alexei Anatolevich Navalny. I would like to provide some clarity on our position on this once again.

So, what do we know as of today? A Russian citizen feels ill on a plane and ends up in a hospital

in Omsk. There they do tests, in which no trace of chemical-weapon agents are found, they save his life and, at the insistence of his family and our German colleagues, send him to Germany for treatment. Soon after, a scandal blows up in Berlin. Apparently Navalny was poisoned by some sort of so-called Novichok, which it is claimed only Russia possesses. In version 1 of the story it was put in his tea, while version 2 said it was in his underwear and version 3, now considered the main one, in a bottle of water in his hotel room in Tomsk. However, as can be seen on video in the hotel, the blogger's supporters pick up the bottle containing the fatal poison with their bare hands and by some mysterious route evade Russia's law-enforcement organs and take it to Germany. There, apparently, while not possessing examples of this so-called Novichok, they determine that it is indeed Novichok, something that it technically impossible without something to compare it to. Apparently, like other Western countries, Germany does possess Novichok.

Aside from that obvious inconsistency, it is not at all clear why it did not harm the people who touched the bottle without wearing protective hazmat clothing since, as we have been told, a drop of this poison could kill an entire city. Neither is it clear, if Navalny really was poisoned at that moment on the plane, why no one sitting next to him was affected. That raises the legitimate question of whether there was any poison in the bottle when Navalny's companions removed it from the hotel room, and questions such as those are piling up.

After that, colleagues from France and Sweden, which, as they claimed, also had no samples of Novichok, confirmed the Germans' conclusions. And then the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) got into the game, something we found out about only post facto, despite the fact that the events concern a Russian citizen. However, the cholinesterase inhibitors found in Navalny's biological samples may not indicate traces of a chemical weapon agent but could result from other factors, including alcohol, energy drinks or powerful drugs, or could be signs of a chronic disease such as pancreatitis, all the more so since the OPCW itself says that the substances found are not on its prohibited list.

At the same time, there are calls on Russia to conduct an investigation to determine who poisoned Navalny and how — a conclusion that is not even being questioned — as if we even had what is needed to conduct such an investigation. But we do not. We do

not have the bottle containing traces of whatever the substance is or other material evidence — they do. The same goes for Navalny and his companions, who would have to be questioned in any investigation. Let me recall that our doctors' tests found nothing. That is why we have already sent four requests to Germany from our Prosecutor General's Office to provide relevant materials. We were answered with a long silence and then a pro forma letter saying that the investigation was ongoing, followed by new accusations. How and what are we supposed to investigate in such a situation?

Despite the fact that he was poisoned by an allegedly deadly substance, Alexei Navalny recovered quickly and regained consciousness. Judging by his many willing interviews with Western media outlets, he showed none of the symptoms typically associated with poisoning by a chemical weapon agent. According to specialists, such symptoms would have left him in a much worse condition. And yet without any evidence he asserts that he might as well have been poisoned by Vladimir Putin himself and is quite pleased to be the centre of attention.

If we imagine, even for a second, that this actually happened, why then would we have let him to go to Berlin along with evidence that he was poisoned? In fact, why save his life if we wanted to poison him? If we wanted to poison him, we would have done it. If we had poisoned him, why would we not have removed every trace of it from the hotel room? And why on earth get rid of Navalny in this insanely complicated way and share the evidence with Germany?

To be honest, based on the setup and the staging, this is very similar to the notorious Skripal case, which presents even more inconsistencies and errors of logic. And there, too, none of our questions are answered. They are simply ignored as if everything was already proven. But nothing has been proven. And we are not okay with these situations — neither with the Skripals nor with Navalny.^[P.P.] The ball is therefore now in our German and European colleagues' court. Acting as though nothing has happened will not work. They either have to give us some rational explanation and cooperate with us normally in investigating this incident, or we will conclude that this is a case of malicious provocation, with all of the consequences that entails. Against that backdrop, the sanctions they have brought against us convince us even more of that.

Mr. Dandy (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked to speak in exercise of the right

to reply to the statements made by various delegations concerning the situation in my country, Syria.

My delegation rejects all the accusations and allegations made against the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. We stress that they merely serve the political agendas of the Governments of States that are hostile to my country. The allegations are made by an orchestra whose main task is tarnishing the image of the Syrian Government and its allies and concealing the use by terrorist organizations of chemical weapons against civilians and the military supported by some Western States. It seems that those Western States refuse to acknowledge the established fact confirmed by Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator of the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations in a closed briefing to the Security Council in June 2014. She underscored that Syria had honoured all its obligations, including the complete destruction of its chemical stockpiles on board an American ship. That was also confirmed in document S/2014/444.

My country has repeatedly stressed that it has never used chemical weapons because it has never possessed them. My Government has met its obligations based on its membership of the OPCW. The Syrian Arab Republic has always sought to cooperate in a positive, professional and transparent manner with the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat, in addition to the Investigation and Identification Team, the Declaration Assessment Team and the Fact-Finding Mission.

Mr. In Chol Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is taking the floor to exercise its right of reply to the statements made by the representatives of the United Kingdom, Sweden, Estonia and other countries earlier today.

We categorically reject those statements as outrageous acts of interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation. We have already rejected the various Security Council resolutions that encroach on the sovereignty, right to exist and development of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Accession to any international instrument is based entirely on the right of a sovereign State. If a State wants to play a role in international peace and security, it first has to learn to adopt an objective and impartial attitude on any issue, with a correct understanding of its nature.

We have clearly stated that the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula was born out of the decades-

old nuclear threats and blackmail of the United States against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This year alone, even in the midst of the turmoil caused by the pandemic, undisguised acts of hostility threatening peace continued on the southern half of the Korean peninsula, including joint military exercises of a provocative nature and the steady introduction of sophisticated military hardware from outside. Under those circumstances, we have been compelled to develop a long-term plan to manage and deter external threats, with a view to safeguarding our national interests and sovereignty. In the context, we have no option but to strengthen and steadily increase our practical capabilities.

Bad habits die hard, but States must boldly give up the bad habit of blindly siding with policies of hostility to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which do not help to ensure peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the rest of the region. If they are truly concerned about peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region, why do States not call for a complete and irreversible end to hostilities against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea? It is better for States to invest their time and energy in Europe rather than in interfering in the internal affairs of others, and to take our advice seriously.

Today my delegation is once again reiterating the position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Our self-defence capabilities serve as a deterrent for guaranteeing the security and future of our State and our people, in response to ever-growing nuclear threats and blackmail from the outside. We are committed to increasing our deterrent military force to defend ourselves, not to use it against others. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will safeguard the sovereignty of the country and the security of its territory, backed by powerful military capabilities, ensuring future peace on the Korean peninsula and in the rest of the region.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the interpreters for their efforts. The next meeting of the First Committee will be held at 10 a.m. tomorrow in this conference room. We will continue with the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items. I urge delegations to be punctual so that we can make progress in our work.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.