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Seventy-fifth session

First Committee

9th meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Santos Maraver(Spain)

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

Agenda items 94 to 110 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

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

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

Mr. Irimia Arosemena (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the Republic of Panama's first statement, allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Agustín Santos Maraver, on your election, as well as the other members of the Bureau. We have complete confidence in your leadership in conducting the work of the First Committee during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly and I assure you of my delegation's full support.

Panama aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Nicaragua on behalf of the States members of the Central American Integration System (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

The Republic of Panama reiterates its commitment to strengthening the disarmament, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and arms control regime. Our country is starkly aware of the challenges and threats to international peace and security in these unprecedented times, such as the impact of the coronavirus disease, which has affected humanitarian

work throughout the world and peacebuilding initiatives in conflict areas. The current situation leads us to reflect on the pertinence of considering the reduction of excessive military spending and prioritizing the use of those resources for humanitarian, social and health causes, including the eradication of poverty and inequality.

Panama reaffirms its commitment to multilateralism in maintaining international peace and security and the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. As a party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco — the world's first instrument creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone — Panama reaffirms its aspiration to achieve a secure world free from weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, we applaud the work of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean as a reference for the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions.

Panama also trusts that, with the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the detection of any nuclear test and the exchange of scientific data and information among Member States will enable us to fulfil our tasks and objectives. In that regard, Panama contributes to those efforts through its Radionuclide Station *RN50*, forming part of the network of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization's International Monitoring System, which aims to have 321 monitoring stations and 16 radionuclide laboratories.

Furthermore, my country attaches particular importance to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, especially with regard to the

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peaceful use of nuclear energy. We therefore welcome the forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2021, which will provide an opportunity to renew the existing commitment of States parties to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Similarly, Panama is proud to be among the first countries to have signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We believe that its entry into force will bring us closer to guaranteeing international peace and security and the irreversible, verifiable and transparent elimination of nuclear weapons.

The humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons are a matter of grave concern if the total elimination of such weapons is not guaranteed. It is therefore appropriate to recall the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons with regard to the existing obligation to pursue in good faith and conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control.

As we witness the increasing misuse of new technologies during the pandemic, we must stress the importance of the recognition and application of international law on the use of information and communication technologies in the context of international security. In that regard, on the understanding that States have the responsibility to ensure a secure, stable, accessible and peaceful environment in cyberspace, Panama appreciates the work 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 in the processes undertaken to that end at the United Nations.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating the importance of maintaining a multidimensional approach to security, which will enable us to achieve sustainable development by encouraging countries to set aside their differences and take advantage of the space offered by the First Committee to seek consensus on the disarmament and international security agenda.

Mr. Mudzviti (Zimbabwe): The Zimbabwe delegation wishes to join other delegations in congratulating you, Mr. Chair, as well as the other members of the Bureau, on your election to preside over the activities of this very important Committee during

the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. The Bureau can count on our support and cooperation as it discharges its functions.

Zimbabwe aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/75/PV.2). In addition to those two statements, we wish to make the following brief remarks in our national capacity.

My delegation joins the United Nations family in offering our sincere condolences to the families of those who have succumbed to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and express our solidarity with nations battling to contain the pandemic, which is probably the biggest socioeconomic and peace and security challenge of our time. The peace and security implications of COVID-19 are likely to continue to be felt for a long time to come.

The exceptional arrangements for the holding of this session of the First Committee define the new normal and are a testament to the enormous scale of the challenge. We rallied behind the Secretary-General, His Excellency António Guterres, in his plea for the suspension of unilateral coercive measures in order to allow targeted countries to access the material and financial support required in the fight against COVID-19.

My delegation shares the frustration of the Non-Aligned Movement at increasing global military expenditure and the modernization of both the nuclear and the conventional arsenals of some Member States at a time when we are seeking common ground on modalities for disarmament. Our fear is that the continued rise in global military expenditure may have inadvertently triggered an arms race in which no nation will feel safe if it cannot match the military arsenal of its rivals. History is littered with lessons of when an arms race was, in part, the cause, effect and consequence of armed conflict. The arms race is, by and large, the cause and consequence of the current mutual suspicion, rivalries and geopolitical tensions, and indeed a potential source of future conflict.

With regard to nuclear weapons, Zimbabwe believes that their elimination is an existential challenge of our time and ought to remain a top priority for the United Nations. Colleagues will recall that, on 2 October, we commemorated the International Day for the Total

Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, on which we reflected on the horrors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945, respectively. The devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should give us the impetus to seek to prevent the further proliferation, development and modernization of nuclear weapons. Their total elimination is of paramount importance to the survival of humankind and planet Earth.

Zimbabwe believes that nuclear disarmament is not a choice but rather an existential imperative that our generation is to pursue in good faith to save future generations from annihilation. As we pursue that shared objective, we should never lose sight of the fact that nuclear-weapon States bear a special responsibility in terms of providing leadership and taking practical action in that endeavour. In that context, we are concerned by the lack of progress on the nuclear disarmament agenda and fear that, instead of progressing, the vision of nuclear disarmament and eventually the total elimination of nuclear weapons is receding, as the nuclear arms control architecture, patiently built over the past 50 years, collapses before our eyes.

We take note of the numerous initiatives that Member States have crafted to advance the nuclear disarmament agenda and welcome the diversity of opinions and approaches. However, we are concerned, as a non-nuclear-weapon State, that the proliferation of initiatives seems to be sending the nuclear disarmament agenda into disarray. We are concerned by the seeming inflexibility of nuclear-weapon States which, despite statements of intent, appear reluctant to relinquish their nuclear arsenals, thereby holding the disarmament agenda hostage. Differing opinions, mutual suspicion and growing geopolitical tensions continue to be an impediment to the entire disarmament machinery, particularly the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament. We hope that the members of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament will reflect on the factors that have contributed to the deadlock and stagnation thus far and find innovative ways to bridge their differences.

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe wishes to express its support for the convening of the United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament, as mandated through the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The conference will provide world leaders with an opportunity to take stock of the state of the

nuclear disarmament debate and breathe new momentum into the nuclear disarmament architecture. To that end, Zimbabwe expresses its support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which we hope will secure the remaining signatures in order to enter into force. As a demonstration of our commitment, we have made arrangements to sign that important Treaty as soon as possible and urge other countries to do the same.

In addition, Zimbabwe adds its voice to the African Group's call for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to achieve universal adherence. In that regard, we call on the eight annex 2 States to consider ratifying or signing the Treaty to pave the way for its operationalization in order to outlaw nuclear tests.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of our collective efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology and to achieve nuclear disarmament. We look forward to the rescheduled tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT in 2021. To that end, Zimbabwe joins other members of the international community in expressing its regret at the failure of the ninth NPT Review Conference in 2015 to reach consensus on a final outcome document that takes care of the interests of all. We appeal to the President-designate to redouble efforts to reach out to States parties to find common ground ahead of the tenth Review Conference. The need for a successful tenth Review Conference, underpinned by a consensus-based, balanced and comprehensive outcome document, is now more urgent than before.

As we engage in the nuclear disarmament debate, Zimbabwe wishes to underscore the fact that our pursuit of non-proliferation should not undermine the inalienable right of States to the use and application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. The right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is one of the three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and that right should be preserved. We emphasize nonetheless that the right to peaceful and development uses and applications of nuclear energy should be enjoyed responsibly, with adequate safeguards to prevent nuclear material and technology falling into the wrong hands.

Zimbabwe is convinced that nuclear-weapon-free zones are an important building block for nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation regime. In that regard, as has been pronounced by other African countries in earlier statements during the general

debate, Zimbabwe remains committed to its obligations under the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, or the Pelindaba Treaty. We reiterate our desire to preserve the African continent as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and contribute towards preventing the installation or testing of nuclear devices on the continent, including in its airspace.

Regarding outer space, Zimbabwe is concerned by the increasing propensity of some States to place weapons in space and turn it into a war-fighting domain. Outer space is one of the so-called common assets of humankind in which every country on Earth has a stake and vested interests. In view of the fact that it is extremely fragile and volatile, we advocate for the establishment of a rules-based order to securely govern that space. We concur with suggestions that have been consistently made by some delegations that negotiations for a legally binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space be held.

Mr. Stefanile (Italy): I wish to start by wishing you, Mr. Chair, and the members of the Bureau a successful holding of this annual session of the First Committee. Rest assured of the full support of the Italian delegation.

Italy aligns itself with the statement previously made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2) and would like to add a few remarks in its national capacity.

The current international scenario is deeply concerning, and we need to act with the utmost urgency and determination to safeguard and strengthen the international architecture on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Effective multilateralism and a rules-based international system are the only tools to preserve the results achieved so far and further advance the relevant processes. The coronavirus disease pandemic has exacerbated conflicts, with dramatic consequences, especially for civilian populations. That is why the appeal of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire must be fully supported and implemented. It is time to put armed conflicts on lockdown, while focusing our common efforts on the fight against the coronavirus. Italy strongly and consistently supports the United Nations disarmament machinery and its three mutually reinforcing forums.

Italy reaffirms its commitment to pursuing the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Fifty years after its entry into force, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), with its three mutually

reinforcing pillars, remains the cornerstone of the international regime. It provides the only realistic legal framework to attain a world without nuclear weapons in a way that promotes international stability and is based on the principle of undiminished security for all. Italy supports efforts to use the remaining time in preparation for the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT as an opportunity to build bridges between States parties and assess the substantial progress achieved thus far.

We call upon the States that have not yet done so to join the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States without any delays or conditions, and we call on all States parties to implement all NPT provisions, as well as commitments agreed upon in subsequent Review Conferences. Nuclear-weapon States bear fundamental responsibilities and we encourage them to seek further reductions in their arsenals while enhancing transparency on their doctrines. The goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world can be attained only through an inclusive and progressive approach, in accordance with article VI of the NPT.

We welcome the strategic stability dialogue between the United States and Russia and we encourage them to seek further reductions, to extend the New START Treaty and to engage on other arms control arrangements, including with a view to their widening in terms of scope and participants.

A main priority for Italy remains the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a crucial component of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture. We urge all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining eight annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay. In the meantime, we call upon all States to respect the moratorium on nuclear-test explosions and to refrain from any action that could undermine the Treaty. The immediate commencement of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty dealing with fissile material is also of crucial importance. Pending the conclusion of such a treaty, all relevant States should abide by a moratorium. Moreover, the Conference on Disarmament could be the framework for the elaboration of recommendations dealing with all aspects of negative security assurances.

Italy also values all initiatives undertaken in the field of nuclear disarmament verification. We support the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and welcome the work conducted within

the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, we reiterate our support for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East based on arrangements freely agreed among all the States of the region.

Italy believes that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) remains a key element in strengthening the non-proliferation architecture. The full implementation of the deal and all provisions of resolution 2231 (2015) is crucial to regional and international security. We urge Iran to return to full compliance without delay and to provide the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with full and timely cooperation with respect to all its safeguard-related commitments. We welcome the joint statement in August by Iran and the IAEA, and we are ready to support initiatives aimed at de-escalating the present tensions and restoring the integrity of the JCPOA.

The repeated ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions, are also deeply concerning. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's intention to retain and further develop its nuclear and ballistic programmes represents a threat that we cannot ignore. We therefore call on Pyongyang to engage in credible negotiations and to give tangible proof of its asserted willingness to denuclearize by returning to the NPT, signing and ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and resuming its collaboration with the IAEA. In the meantime, the international sanctions regime needs to remain in place.

Italy remains strongly committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We strongly condemn any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone and under any circumstances. It is imperative to identify and hold accountable the perpetrators of chemical attacks. Italy firmly condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian air force, as concluded by the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team. We welcome the decision of the OPCW Executive Council taken in July and we urge Syria to take all the measures required.

We also condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the poisoning of Alexei Navalny with a chemical nerve agent. Italy welcomes the delivery of the OPCW's analysis and calls on Russia to investigate and disclose

in a transparent manner the circumstances of that attack, fully cooperate with the OPCW in order to resolve this issue and, ultimately, comply with its obligations as a State party to the CWC.

The current pandemic has shown how important it is to work together to improve biosecurity and biosafety. We attach great importance to the Biological Weapons Convention and to the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. In a context characterized by fast-paced scientific and technological developments, we should strengthen the Convention and endow it with the appropriate mechanisms to assess the potential impact of such developments.

Italy is deeply concerned by the increasing risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors. We strongly support Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and we underline the importance of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Italy is extremely concerned by the indiscriminate humanitarian and socioeconomic impacts of anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war, as well as improvised explosive devices, especially on civilians and in urban zones. We believe that international cooperation and victim assistance are key components of a comprehensive approach to mine action.

We should also contemplate gender- and diversity-responsive assistance. We welcome the results achieved last year on the occasion of the fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, in line with our commitment to a world free of mines. We also look forward to participating in the second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions as another important milestone.

With regard to the extremely serious humanitarian impact of explosive weapons in populated areas, we support the process led by Ireland, which will potentially lead to a political declaration aimed at strengthening our collective commitments.

With regard to the protection of civilians, and bearing in mind the data on armed violence, we believe in the importance of countering illicit arm transfers. We call for the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty and the full implementation of its provisions.

Italy also actively supports the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its protocols. We attach great importance to their universalization, full compliance with their provisions and the development of any possible synergy among them. We especially welcome the substantive outcomes of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems in endorsing the 11 guiding principles. Bearing in mind the importance of applying international humanitarian law to all weapons systems, we believe it is crucial to reach a consensus on the possible elements of a normative and operational framework.

We are firmly committed to the long-term sustainability, safety and security of outer space. It is important to develop initiatives that will increase confidence and mutual trust among current and future space actors. In that regard, we highlight the role of transparency and confidence-building measures and encourage further international cooperation to elaborate agreed principles of responsible behaviour.

Moreover, information and communication technologies and the Internet are among the greatest human achievements of all time. We are therefore committed to supporting efforts towards establishing a cyberspace that is based on respect for international law. Institutional dialogue is a key tool, and Italy supports the proposal to establish a programme of action on advancing responsible behaviour in cyberspace.

Across all those issues, greater interaction with civil society could make a key contribution. Moreover, Italy promotes policies and approaches that enable the full empowerment of women and pay due attention to the gendered impacts of armed violence and the importance of including women in disarmament negotiations and peacebuilding programmes.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. We wish you and the other members of the Bureau all the best and assure you of our full support for the success of the Committee's work.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the States members of the Movement of Non-Aligned

Countries (see A/C.1/75/PV.2). I wish to highlight the following issues in my national capacity.

First, the Government of the Republic of Iraq is moving forward based on its firm policy of supporting efforts in support of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), as well as strengthening cooperation with the international community to that end. We recognize the significant threats posed by the proliferation of all such weapons.

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Iraq and legitimate international instruments, my Government stresses the importance of consolidating the international rules-based system, based on the rules and principles agreed upon by the international community. We must enhance international cooperation and bolster joint efforts to achieve the goals set out in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the maintenance of international peace and security, in order to move towards peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

We support all efforts to that end made by the United Nations, its specialized agencies and Member States. We welcome all contributions aimed at giving momentum to disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms. At the same time, we stress the need to continue our efforts to strengthen the universality of the relevant conventions and treaties, as they constitute the only guarantee for the non-use of nuclear weapons or other WMDs.

Iraq recognizes the importance and stature of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral forum for negotiating disarmament. We reiterate the need for Member States to shoulder their responsibilities and demonstrate the flexibility and political will required to end the current stalemate so that the Conference may resume its negotiating role and produce satisfactory results that address the concerns of Member States.

Furthermore, Iraq underscores the importance of the role played by the United Nations Disarmament Commission as the multilateral deliberative body concerned with disarmament issues within the United Nations. In that regard, we express our deep regret that the Commission did not meet this year and renew our call on Member States to demonstrate flexibility and resolve any disputes that would delay the resumption of meetings by the Disarmament Commission.

Secondly, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has not witnessed a balanced implementation of its three pillars in a way that reflects the commitments of Member States, despite the more than 50 years that have elapsed since its adoption. There is clearly something wrong with its implementation, owing to the insistence of nuclear States not to translate into practice their nuclear disarmament commitments in line with the provisions of article VI of the NPT and decision 2 on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. In that context, we are deeply concerned about the failure of international efforts to adopt the final document of the 2015 Review Conference.

We stress the importance of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), on preventing terrorists from possessing nuclear and other WMDs. Measures of nuclear security at the national level are necessary to prevent terrorists from possessing such weapons. Calls for a world free of nuclear weapons therefore constitute a legitimate demand that could save the world from the threat of nuclear terrorism.

Iraq voted in favour of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted by the General Assembly on 7 July 2017, based on the objective of supporting international efforts or any initiative that contributes to reducing the threat of nuclear weapons and other WMDs. We also co-sponsored a draft resolution on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons (A/C.1/75/L.5). My Government is sparing no effort to facilitate the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which contributes to strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

My country's delegation underscores the inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and technologies, without distinction, within the framework of the NPT.

Thirdly, the continued development and sale of conventional weapons constitutes a direct threat to the security and stability of States and societies, a threat no less dangerous than that of nuclear weapons and other WMDs. The massive illegal accumulation of small arms and light weapons — along with their misuse — fuels conflicts among States, terrorist attacks, organized crime and guerrilla warfare, which pose significant challenges to the international community.

We therefore emphasize the need for enhanced international cooperation in order to establish a comprehensive system to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, prohibit the export of such weapons and control their movement across borders. In that context, Iraq welcomes the adoption of the final document of the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We hope that Member States will reach a positive outcome at the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, which will be held in 2021 instead of this year.

Similarly, I wish to refer to the dangers of the proliferation of anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war, as well as of cluster munitions, which have multiple implications owing to their negative social, environmental and economic impacts on countries. Iraq is at the forefront of countries that suffer the most from the scourge of mines and improvised explosive devices. The criminal and heinous practice of the laying of mines and improvised explosive devices by Da'esh terrorist gangs in various regions of Iraq has greatly impeded Government efforts to safely return displaced persons to their homes.

Therefore, we call on donor countries and international organizations to coordinate their efforts and work together with the Iraqi Government to ensure that the necessary support and assistance reach those in need in order to eliminate the devastating effects of such mines on both human and economic development.

Fourthly, with regard to regional security, the Republic of Iraq reaffirms the importance of establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. In that context, we commend the efforts undertaken to convene the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, presided over by Jordan in November 2019, in line with General Assembly decision 73/546.

That step forward, along with other international efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, contributes to the maintenance of international peace and security. We look forward to the holding of the second session of the Conference in

2021, to be presided over by Kuwait, and pledge our continued support to that end.

My country's delegation stresses the need for the Israeli entity to disarm of its nuclear weapons and accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State, while subjecting all its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency comprehensive safeguards system and participating in the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Fifthly, we commend the determined efforts of the Chairperson of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security with a view to drafting a report on that topic.

In conclusion, respect for the rules of international law is the very cornerstone of lasting international stability. It is therefore essential to focus on the principles of transparency and international cooperation.

Mr. Zambrana Torrelío (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, as well as the other members of the Bureau, on your and their elections to steer the work of the First Committee. We are confident that, under your leadership, we will be able to address and bring to a successful conclusion the challenges facing the Committee in its work.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

Today we find ourselves at a particularly challenging time for disarmament and international security. We live in an era of growing uncertainty and instability in the field of global security. This year in particular, we must also address the collateral effects of the health crisis resulting from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We therefore reiterate our commitment to the call by the Secretary-General in March for a global ceasefire in all conflicts, and we agree that during the current pandemic we must join forces to save lives and mitigate the social and economic devastation of our peoples. We must therefore mitigate all conflict situations in order to facilitate humanitarian access in situations of vulnerability.

In that connection, Bolivia promotes disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control as key components for the maintenance of international peace and security. Likewise, we consider full and verifiable nuclear disarmament to be essential in order to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Bolivia is situated in the world's first densely populated zone to declare itself free of nuclear weapons, under the Treaty of Tlatelolco, as well as the first region to be designated a zone of peace. In that context, we believe that weapons of mass destruction — in particular nuclear weapons — are the most inhumane weapons ever conceived, the deadly impact of which endures for decades.

As long as some States continue to pursue an arms race, we must continue to demand a ban on the development, testing, production, acquisition and possession of nuclear arsenals and explosives. In other words, simply seeking to develop such arms contravenes the purpose and objectives of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, as well as the obligations and provisions set out in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We must strengthen the NPT as the cornerstone and principal mechanism for non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

We regret that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tenth Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT could not be held as originally planned. Nevertheless, we hope the Conference will be able to take place soon, if circumstances allow.

We condemn the possible use or threat of use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent measure, which constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. It was precisely as a result of our commitment to nuclear disarmament that, on 6 August 2019, Bolivia became the twenty-fifth country to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In the light of the vital importance of the Treaty, we call on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify it.

In the same vein, we reaffirm our steadfast position in favour of the total elimination of chemical and biological weapons, which is a priority in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We categorically reject the use of chemical weapons — an unjustifiable

and criminal act — anywhere and by anyone, as that would constitute a serious violation of international law.

The issue of anti-personnel mines continues to require the attention of the international community. We highlight the importance of cooperation in mine clearance and victim assistance efforts. Mines constitute a serious threat to civilian populations and impede economic development in rural and urban areas. Their elimination is therefore a necessary condition for the development and integration of peoples, especially border populations, as it would contribute to the strengthening of a common strategy to combat poverty.

Another major concern for the international community, my delegation included, is the possession of small arms and light weapons, owing to their widespread availability, low cost and ease of use. In that regard, Bolivia considers that the excessive accumulation and circulation of such weapons hampers the prevention of internal conflicts and renders the fight against organized crime more difficult.

For Bolivia, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects constitutes a serious threat to peace, security, governance, stability and the democratic and institutional order of all countries. We do not believe the problem can be addressed unilaterally, hence it is necessary to bolster efforts to establish a regional and multilateral forum that promotes, on an ongoing basis, the exchange of information and experience among countries at the regional level, as well as cooperation with international agencies.

We agreed with many delegations that stated that the promotion and exploration of outer space should be solely for peaceful purposes, for the benefit of all humankind and in the interests of all States, regardless of their level of scientific, economic or social development.

In the same vein, we wish to state that, while it is true that new technologies can help us to overcome existing risk situations and promote greater understanding between nations and international organizations in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we are convinced that it is necessary to work towards a stable and accessible cyberspace within the framework of international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights.

Against that backdrop, Bolivia stresses the need to promote joint international coordination and

cooperation efforts in order to expand information and communication technologies by raising public awareness of cybersecurity issues. We must also develop a strategy for a comprehensive approach to tackling all threats to national security.

In that context, we hope that both the work 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 will lead to consensus-based conclusions that will enable us to undertake commitments to promote the use of such technologies in an open, secure and peaceful manner, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Our current reality is plagued by increasing tensions at the global level that imply great humanitarian cost. Bolivia therefore calls for respect for international law and, as a peace-loving nation and advocate for the culture of and right to peace, also calls for the implementation of peaceful means for the settlement of disputes, the use of good offices and preventive diplomacy. Above all, we call for the use of multilateralism as a mechanism that should be the basic principle of all negotiations on complete disarmament and non-proliferation. To that end, Mr. Chair, you can count on my delegation's commitment to support the work of the First Committee.

Ms. Bartolini (San Marino): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections and wish you a successful session.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has caused death and suffering, as well as health, economic and humanitarian emergencies, in every corner of the world. It has affected every aspect of our daily lives and, as we all know, it is also affecting our work on disarmament. Many processes have been postponed, but we have also found new ways to cooperate and continue our work. Nevertheless, we have regrettably seen signs of the further erosion of the international arms control regime.

San Marino firmly believes in a world free of nuclear weapons. Any detonation, whether intentional or by accident or miscalculation, would have catastrophic and long-lasting humanitarian consequences and tragic effects on our lives, the environment and future

generations. This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), an instrument that remains the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament. We look forward to the convening of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT, and we stand ready to cooperate in order to consolidate its critical role and strengthen the implementation of all three of its pillars.

The Republic of San Marino is extremely worried by the current increase in global tensions and, above all, by the ongoing modernization of nuclear arsenals. Such activities run counter to the fulfilment of existing obligations under the NPT and do not align with our final goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

We are equally worried about the collapse of important nuclear arms control agreements, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and we are concerned for the future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Furthermore, the New START Treaty will expire in February 2021. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing discussions between the United States and Russia, which we hope will lead to an extension of the New START Treaty.

The nuclear and ballistic missile activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continue to pose a serious threat to international security and undermine the process towards achieving lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. We therefore call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its programme and to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

This year we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the first use of nuclear weapons in warfare against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The touching testimonies of the survivors are a constant reminder that we need to urgently commit to a world free of nuclear weapons. The Republic of San Marino has therefore decided to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, an instrument that can make a critical contribution to peace and security. We encourage other countries to sign and ratify the Treaty.

San Marino stands for a world free of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons. We are convinced that peace and security can be reached through cooperation, dialogue, transparency and trust and by investing in education, development and cooperation rather than in armaments and wars. We are worried by the

recent incidents related to cases of the use of chemical weapons. We firmly condemn such horrific acts, which pose a significant challenge to the international norm against chemical weapons. The use of chemical or biological weapons by anyone, at any time and under any circumstances is unacceptable, and we reiterate the importance of accountability.

Each year, tens of thousands of civilians are killed or injured by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Men, women, children, disabled people, refugees and aid workers are increasingly placed on the front lines of warfare, risking their lives in their own homes, workplaces, schools and hospitals.

In addition to the physical and psychological damage caused to civilians, explosive weapons destroy and disrupt essential services, which will cease to be available over time. Affected civilians are not able to receive medical care, attend classes or access clean water. Those who survive are often forced to flee from their homes and may be displaced for years or even decades. Affected areas often become inaccessible to humanitarian aid, causing even more challenges and exacerbating suffering.

The use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects causes indiscriminate harm and has a devastating impact on individuals and communities. The Republic of San Marino therefore calls on all parties to refrain from the use of such weapons in populated areas and to fully comply with international humanitarian law. San Marino fully supports the adoption of an international political declaration on the prevention of civilian harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

We are increasingly dependent on outer space activities in our everyday lives, a fact that has clearly emerged during the current pandemic. It is therefore critical that outer space remain a peaceful domain for the benefit of all. We must therefore work together to advance discussions and cooperate in favour of further transparency and norms of responsible behaviour in that field.

San Marino is also worried about the improper use of cyberspace. Cybercrime is one of the fastest developing threats to international security. Recently, a number of malicious digital operations have targeted medical facilities, undermining the response to the health crisis, while others have spread misinformation and thereby put people's lives at risk. It is therefore critical to support responsible State behaviour in

cyberspace to ensure that the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected and implemented in cyberspace.

San Marino is also concerned about the consequences of the application of technology and artificial intelligence in weapons systems, which pose serious legal and ethical doubts. We therefore need to cooperate and address the emerging challenges related to lethal autonomous weapons systems.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated socioeconomic conditions everywhere, threatening to create new situations of instability, tension and armed violence. Consequently, the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons is even more dangerous today. Furthermore, such weapons are predominantly used in cases of domestic and gender-based violence, which have regrettably been increasing in recent months. That crisis has enormously aggravated the living conditions of civilians trapped in armed conflicts, where the irresponsible transfer of arms can have devastating consequences. We should therefore continue to strengthen existing instruments in that field.

San Marino promptly endorsed the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. We call on all parties to do the same and fully implement the ceasefire. It is time to stop fighting and face a common and powerful enemy — the COVID-19 pandemic. Health systems everywhere are at risk of collapsing, and the situation in conflict areas is totally unbearable.

At such a challenging time, our work is even more critical. As we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, it is important to fully recommit to our multilateral forums. We can play a fundamental role in support of the common good and the advancement of disarmament and non-proliferation. We have the opportunity to build back better, so let us put animosity aside, renew our determination for success and work together for progress and peace.

Mr. Laba (Botswana): Allow me, at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election. My delegation assures you and the Bureau of our total support as we engage in the demanding task of guiding the deliberations of the First Committee during this session. The importance of the First Committee and the role it plays in the preservation of international peace and security cannot be overemphasized.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

Let me begin by reaffirming the importance that Botswana attaches to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security. We firmly believe that disarmament and international peace and security should continue to feature prominently on the agenda of the United Nations for as long as peace and stability are not realized. As long as the world remains seized with various conflicts and threats to international peace and security, the noble objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 16 will remain but a dream. The common sentiment is that peace and security and stability are the prerequisites for the promotion of an inclusive society for sustainable development.

The global security situation is deteriorating due to the threats caused by the new arms race, which involves the illicit trade in weapons and technologies across a broad spectrum, ranging from small arms and light weapons to weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, the international community should reinforce efforts to free the world of illicit arms and weapons of mass destruction. Those efforts are especially important in addressing the need to keep such weapons out of the hands of violent non-State actors.

The continued existence of weapons of mass destruction poses grave implications for human survival, particularly in terms of the environment, socioeconomic development, the global economy, food security and health-care systems. Those weapons inflict disproportionate and indiscriminate harm. More frightening is the risk that a terrorist individual or group will obtain and use weapons of mass destruction against innocent citizens. In that regard, my delegation wishes to see significant progress on disarmament relating to weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

In that connection, we are concerned by the slow pace at which nuclear-weapon States are implementing the nuclear disarmament agenda. We encourage nuclear-weapon States to recommit to nuclear disarmament and work towards the total elimination of those weapons. Botswana considers nuclear weapons to be an existential threat to humankind due to the humanitarian disaster

that would be caused by a nuclear detonation, whether by accident, miscalculation or design.

We are of the view that nuclear technology must be exploited and appropriately utilized for peaceful purposes that contribute meaningfully to uplifting the living standards and advancing the livelihoods of humankind, rather than for making destructive weapons that maim and kill. In that context, on 15 July, Botswana became the fortieth Member State to deposit an instrument of ratification for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The event aptly coincided with the eleventh anniversary of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Pelindaba.

In the same vein, Botswana supports calls for the complete eradication of equally deadly chemical and biological weapons. Indeed, the use of such weapons constitutes a serious crime against humanity and is contradictory to the morality of public conscience. In that connection, Botswana fully commits to the norms and laws against the use of chemical and biological weapons in any form.

Small arms and illegally diverted weapons are a major cause for concern in terms of international peace and security. The global market is flooded with such weapons, which are commonly used by terrorist and rebel groups and armed criminal groups, as they are relatively cheap and easily maintained and their ammunition is easily accessible. The illicit trade in arms and ammunition contributes to the vast proliferation of violence, lawlessness and conflict and poses a significant threat to international peace and security. We therefore call upon the international community to pay greater attention to the complications and security risks caused by illicit small arms by ensuring strict compliance with the regulations of the Arms Trade Treaty and taking significant action towards effective disarmament and arms control.

Gender equality is essential for the effective promotion of international peace and security. In that regard, my delegation is concerned with the disparity between women and men in terms of the levels and volume of their participation in disarmament and arms control discussions, negotiations and processes, despite the fact that women often suffer disproportionate or differential harm from the development, use and trade of weapons.

Incorporating women into the disarmament agenda would promote their role as agents of change who can bring valuable perspectives, skills and experience to decision-making processes in order to formulate effective disarmament initiatives. We call for a gender-balanced approach to disarmament, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

Promoting robust human security initiatives calls for practical measures to reduce levels of global violence and eliminate institutional and ideological impediments to addressing violence, mass atrocities and severe human rights violations in as timely a manner as possible. Among all those requirements, particular importance must be attached to the full participation of women and young people at all stages of decision-making processes.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Botswana's commitment to the disarmament agenda and the multilateral framework within which that noble goal is pursued. As the international community reimagines its approach to global problems in the wake of the coronavirus disease pandemic, there is also a need to recommit to disarmament in all its forms.

Mr. Koba (Indonesia): At the outset, Mr. Chair, allow me to congratulate you as well as the other members of the Bureau on your elections and to commend your efforts to ensure that the First Committee can continue its work, even amid the limitations imposed by the coronavirus disease pandemic. I assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation in achieving meaningful outcomes. Our delegation also appreciates the excellent work of the Chair and Bureau members of the Committee at the previous session.

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

On the occasion of its seventy-fifth anniversary, the achievements of the United Nations cannot be separated from the work of the First Committee. Indeed, the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly (resolution 1 (I)) established the need for proposals for the elimination of atomic and other weapons of mass destruction. Unfortunately, nuclear weapons continue to be developed and modernized, expanding conflicts instead of reducing them and bringing more complexity and danger into the world.

At the general debate in September, the President of the Republic of Indonesia said:

“At a time when we ought to unite and work together to tackle the pandemic, what we see, instead, is [...] deep division and growing rivalries.” (*see A/75/PV.5, annex XVI*)

Those rivalries have been worsened by nuclear security doctrines and umbrellas that spawn a false sense of security. The continued reliance on nuclear weapons invites proliferation and unrest as well. We therefore call for the full, effective and balanced implementation of all three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Regrettably, the implementation of disarmament commitments is lagging behind. The postponement until 2021 of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT should be used to realize the disarmament commitments agreed upon at previous Review Conferences.

Indonesia reaffirms that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons complements the NPT. We welcome the progress made with regard to the ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which brings it closer to its entry into force; Indonesia is currently in the process of ratifying it.

We also underline the banning of nuclear-weapon tests and call upon the annex 2 States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Indonesia fully supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones where such zones have yet to be formed. We welcome the holding in 2019 of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction. We urge all countries in the Middle East to participate in the next session. The comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards should be adhered to unconditionally in the region and elsewhere. All States should also support that effort and reject any narrative of exceptionalism, which will discredit the NPT and strengthen the perception of double standards.

Indonesia maintains its support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and resolution 2231 (2015). We call on all parties to fulfil their commitments in good faith and contribute positively to regional stability.

In our own region, Indonesia stands ready to intensify efforts to resolve all outstanding issues in

accordance with the objectives and principles of the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty with a view to the signing and ratification of the Protocol to the Treaty by the nuclear-weapon States at the earliest opportunity. We reiterate our call for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

We are concerned by the proliferating arms race in outer space and the weaponization of cyberspace. Indonesia emphasizes the imperative that outer space and cyberspace be explored and utilized exclusively for peaceful purposes. The pandemic has shown how increasingly dependent the world is on information and communications technology. We need to ensure that cyberspace remains stable and peaceful.

The deliberations on the rules, norms and principles of responsible State behaviour therefore need to be intensified through the work of 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, in which Indonesia actively participates.

With regard to outer space, we must continue our effort to prevent an arms race and the placement of weapons in outer space. We also urge the Conference on Disarmament to undertake substantive work and achieve a legally binding instrument.

Indonesia is also deeply concerned by the illegal supply and use of conventional weapons by unauthorized actors, which has led to an immense loss of life and property. We therefore fully support the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We call for stronger international cooperation and support on its implementation.

All weapons of mass destruction, including biological and chemical weapons, are immoral tools. We must all stand clearly against them. As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Indonesia is firmly committed to the full and effective implementation of its obligations under the Convention. We call on all States parties to the CWC to fulfil their obligations under the Convention without further delay.

Indonesia also calls on all States that are not yet party to the CWC to join it without delay or preconditions.

The goals and objectives of the CWC can be realized fully only once its universality is achieved. We also underscore the need to preserve the credibility of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons so that it can fulfil its mandate free from politicization.

On the Biological Weapons Convention, we underscore that the most credible and sustainable method of strengthening the Convention is through a legally binding protocol that deals with all articles of the Convention, including a verification regime. We deem it necessary to explore a multilaterally agreed, efficient and inclusive verification system for all disarmament conventions and arms control agreements.

Indonesia underlines the need to bolster multilateralism. The fault does not reside in the United Nations disarmament machinery; the fundamental obstacle is the lack of political will. We have to work together better with a greater sense of collective responsibility and a desire to achieve the greater good that could emanate from the work of the Committee.

Our Minister of Foreign Affairs underscored recently that nuclear disarmament should provide concrete dividends for global prosperity. We should all aspire to divert the significant budget for armaments, especially weapons of mass destruction, towards addressing global pandemics and their multidimensional aftermath and strengthening United Nations peace machinery, including its peacekeeping missions, which are the flagship of the Organization.

We should therefore focus on the Committee's mandate and finding a way to advance its work in good faith. The First Committee should not be distracted by the politicization of issues, including those within its scope.

In conclusion, Indonesia is ready to engage constructively with all delegations to help ensure that concrete results are produced by this indispensable Committee.

Ms. Šćepanović (Montenegro): Let me start by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, as well as the other members of the Bureau on your elections; we assure you of our full support.

Montenegro fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2). I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its multiple devastating consequences for the lives of people around the world has reminded us of the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in addressing the issues and challenges that transcend national borders.

Apart from the unprecedented consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, we face serious challenges to international security and stability due to a number of factors, such as the expiration of some of the most important agreements on limiting and controlling conventional and weapons of mass destruction and the return of Cold War tensions, which have been further complicated by the lack of constructive dialogue among key actors. In order to preserve international peace and security and stability, it is of the utmost importance that all States uphold international norms, fully implement the obligations and commitments undertaken, restore dialogue and trust and promote transparency and confidence-building measures.

Montenegro is strongly committed to nuclear disarmament and achieving the vision of a nuclear-free world as soon as possible. Even though the overall number of nuclear weapons is declining, they are now being rebuilt and modernized and are much more powerful than ever before. That is especially worrisome in the context of low-yield nuclear weapons, which threaten to lower the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

At the same time, the risk of the proliferation of such weapons and of technical malfunction and human failure is always present, jeopardizing international peace and security. That is something we must address with determination and resolve if we are to live in a safe and secure world. As the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of international action on disarmament and non-proliferation, we must ensure its universalization and enhance its full implementation. We should also redouble our efforts to secure the successful outcome of the upcoming Review Conference of States Parties to the NPT.

Montenegro strongly supports the important role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear safety and security, in particular its safeguards system in the context of the implementation of the NPT. As a State party to all major IAEA conventions and other

international instruments, Montenegro fully abides by its international commitments in order to meet the highest standards of nuclear safety and security and harmonize its national regulatory and legislative framework with the relevant IAEA standards.

We join others in calling on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), especially those listed in its annex 2. Although the Treaty has not yet entered into force, the nuclear-test moratorium has become the *de facto* international norm. Without the lasting and legally binding effect of the entry into force of the CTBT, that norm is very fragile, as we witnessed in the recent past. It is also critical to start immediate negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Montenegro fully supports the implementation of the relevant international instruments in the field of disarmament and arms control, as well as the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament. We emphasize the importance of the universalization of the most important documents in that area in order to preserve international peace and security and stability.

The re-emergence of chemical weapons is one of the most urgent threats to international peace and security and must be dealt with firmly and collectively. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone and under any circumstances. We believe that ensuring accountability and ending impunity for the use of chemical weapons is crucial to preserve the integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention — a key instrument of the international non-proliferation and arms control regime — and to uphold the global norm on the non-use of chemical weapons.

In that context, we welcome the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and hope the international community will take appropriate measures to protect the core principles of the Convention.

Montenegro remains committed to promoting, improving and safeguarding the regime and values established by the Arms Trade Treaty, recognizing its role in preserving peace and security and preventing human suffering. We are also devoted 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.

Within the framework of the Franco-German initiative on small arms and light weapons, Montenegro reaffirms its commitment to further contributing to efforts to develop and implement policies and the highest standards in that area. In order to fully implement the initiative's road map, future activities will be focused on combating the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons and related ammunition in the Western Balkans, as well as facilitating further efforts in our region to meet the key security requirements necessary for European integration.

We strongly support efforts towards the full implementation and universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We demonstrated our commitment to the Convention by clearing our territory contaminated with cluster munitions well before the deadline.

We recognize the unique attributes of information and communications technologies and the fact that cyberspace has become a backbone of our societies. However, we are concerned at the scope and severity of the malicious use of information and communications technologies, which undermines and threatens our integrity, security and economic growth and increases the risk of conflicts.

In that regard, we welcome the willingness of the international community to engage on the issue, in particular through the work 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.

While recognizing the merits and specificities of those initiatives in order to avoid redundancies, we should work on establishing one common track towards consensus on cyber issues in the context of international security. In that regard, we support the proposal to establish a programme of action on advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace to streamline work towards an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful cyberspace.

As we witness the ongoing deterioration of the global security environment, let me conclude by reiterating the importance of upholding the rules-based multilateral system and preserving and enhancing the general arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes.

In doing so, we must renew the dialogue and rebuild mutual trust in order to restore global security.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to you, Mr. Chair, on your election. I remain convinced that your rich experience and leadership will be valuable assets to the success of our work, despite the difficult context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Allow me also to thank your predecessor and his team, whose tireless efforts were crucial to the success of the work of the previous session.

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Cameroon on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

The seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly is being held against the backdrop of an unprecedented health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic, which seriously disrupted much of the work of the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, will undoubtedly continue to disrupt the work of the current session. Given that the pandemic is the focus of the entire international community's attention, it is also having a negatively impact on the consolidation of the international security framework in general and disarmament in particular.

Indeed, while all States have been mobilized to curb the health crisis, the ongoing arms race could undermine the international disarmament architecture, seriously affecting previous gains made in the maintenance of international peace and security. Côte d'Ivoire therefore reiterates its full support for the Secretary-General's call for an immediate ceasefire in all armed conflicts around the world in order to combat the COVID-19 pandemic more effectively.

The celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations sadly reminds us of the tragic events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which changed our world profoundly. I would like to reiterate my delegation's wish to see our planet forever preserved from the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of the use of nuclear weapons; as former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan put it, they represent a unique existential threat to all humankind.

In the light of our determination in that regard, as reflected in our often-repeated position during our recent term on the Security Council from 2018 to 2019, Côte d'Ivoire was one of the very first States to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We are endeavouring to consolidate that commitment by completing our ratification of the Treaty, just as we have done for many other instruments such as the Treaty of Pelindaba, which declared Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

In that vein and with a view to contributing to the strengthening of our collective security, in December 2019 my country ratified the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency, which we signed on 26 September 1986.

With regard to other weapons of mass destruction, my delegation notes with dismay that chemical weapons, far from being banned from the arsenals of States, are being used repeatedly. We would therefore like to call on all States to comply with their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 1540 (2004), on the prevention of the proliferation of arsenals of weapons of mass destruction, *inter alia*.

Côte d'Ivoire supports all initiatives to strengthen cooperation in promoting the safety and security of information and communications technologies. However, we deplore the fact that cyberspace has become an issue of confrontation between States, and therefore the chosen arena for a new arms race. We are also concerned by the increasing misuse of information and communications technologies by terrorist groups and organized crime networks, which are attacking critical infrastructure, in particular health infrastructure, in the sensitive context of COVID-19.

My delegation therefore calls for increased digital cooperation in order to foster trust among States, ensure secure access to information and communications technologies and develop the capacities of the most vulnerable countries. With regard to discussions on advances in information technology in the context of international security, we also advocate the use of cyberspace in accordance with international law, human rights and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, we believe that the adoption of standards of conduct, without prejudice to the adoption of legally binding rules,

can be conducive to protecting critical infrastructure and reclaiming the proper use of information and communications technologies.

Côte d'Ivoire has always supported the principle of the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes on the basis of international regulations and cooperation. Such exploration must be in the common interests of all States, no matter their level of economic or scientific development. Nevertheless, we would like to express our concern with regard to plans to deploy weapons in that environment, raising the spectre of an extra-atmospheric war with irreversible consequences for humankind.

My delegation therefore urges all stakeholders to work to prevent an arms race in outer space, which would jeopardize international peace and security. We support the legal regime currently applicable to the uses of outer space, pending its consolidation and strengthening through more robust and effective regulation of outer space.

The issue of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking in small arms and light weapons unfortunately remains highly topical. While my delegation welcomes the significant efforts made to curb that phenomenon, in particular those aimed at addressing the factors that fuel the illicit trade in such weapons, we remain concerned about the adverse consequences of small arms and light weapons on peace, stability and development. My country would therefore like to take this opportunity to stress the importance of assistance to States to curb the illicit circulation and enable the collection of small arms and light weapons.

In that connection, my delegation welcomes the support that Côte d'Ivoire recently received from the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs within the framework of the initiative to make September 2020 Africa Amnesty Month. The project, aimed at reducing the illicit possession and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in African countries, seamlessly complements the African Union's ambitious plan to silence the guns in Africa and aligns with the Ivorian Government's security priorities.

Another issue is that of improvised explosive devices, which are increasingly used by armed groups, terrorists and other unauthorized actors and cause many casualties. Given that worrisome phenomenon, it is urgently necessary to strengthen international

cooperation and pool our means of action, focusing on prevention and raising public awareness.

Our collective security depends on control over weapons of mass destruction and other small arms and light weapons, but also on the effectiveness of the mechanisms put in place to regulate and combat their abusive or illicit production and use.

In that regard, strengthening the capacities of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament through increased funding remains essential. The Centres, including the Regional Centre in Africa, based in Lomé, have proved over the years to be relevant instruments for disarmament and arms control at the regional level. They are equally instrumental in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Côte d'Ivoire, which supports a more inclusive approach to disarmament, also remains sensitive to the significant role of women in that process, particularly in vulnerable countries and in the field of education, in order to ensure the sustainability of our actions in that area.

Finally, my delegation would like to urge all stakeholders to remove the existing political obstructions, in particular within the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission, which are detrimental to the proper functioning of those bodies and to the credibility of our Organization.

The negative impact of the global health crisis on our work and on gains previously made in the field of disarmament requires us to redouble our efforts in order to attain our noble objective — to build a world of lasting peace and security for the benefit of present and future generations. We remain convinced that it is possible to reach that goal if we consistently prioritize seeking concerted solutions to current security problems. Such solutions are necessary in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, for which disarmament and the strengthening of international peace and security are essential.

Mr. Karbou (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau, on your elections. We are confident that under your leadership, the First

Committee will achieve the objectives assigned to it at this session despite the exceptional circumstances impacting our work. Please rest assured of my delegation's support in the fulfilment of your mandate.

I also wish to state that my country aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the Group of African States and the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/75/1), which details the implementation of the key elements of the disarmament programme over the past year, along with the 50 concrete actions he has proposed with a view to advancing disarmament.

Today more than ever, we have a particular responsibility to advance disarmament worldwide in the face of changing technologies and the emergence of increasingly devastating weapons, which bring with them new and greater global threats.

While the year 2020 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the thirty-second anniversary of the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, it has been seriously disrupted by the unprecedented health crisis of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, whose disastrous economic and financial repercussions remind us that our commitment to multilateralism must remain steadfast and needs to be strengthened.

That is why my delegation shares the Secretary-General's concern about the economic shock caused by the current pandemic — the most serious since the Second World War and the most widespread since 1870, which could lead to a contraction in global growth of 5 to 6 per cent. While it has been established that a decreased growth rate of more than 5 per cent in the growth rate could increase the risk of conflict by 50 per cent, our response must allow us to take pre-emptive action, in particular by strengthening the general and complete disarmament machinery and promoting all initiatives that contribute to maintaining international peace and security.

Based on the observation that the COVID-19 pandemic is undermining development and peacebuilding achievements, as well as threatening to exacerbate conflicts and give rise to others, Togo is concerned about the failure of the ninth Review

Conference of the Parties to the NPT and the ongoing impasse in the Conference on Disarmament. We therefore call for the strengthening of the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament so that it can fully undertake its role in all areas of disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament.

Furthermore, my delegation shares the efforts being made by all parties to review the United Nations peacebuilding architecture and welcomes the significant progress made by the various States concerned 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 in November 2019.

The new challenges arising from today's unusual circumstances should not lead us to forget the evils putting the world at risk and posing a grave threat to the security of our peoples. Whether related to terrorism, the possession and use of chemical and nuclear weapons or the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, those threats remain real and require our continued attention.

Therefore, Togo wishes to take this opportunity to commend the resilience shown by the three United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament, which have continued to carry out their mandates despite the exceptional circumstances we are all dealing with. My delegation would especially like to note the importance of the role played by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, the headquarters of which my country is honoured to host. This year, the Centre continued to provide substantive support to the African Union, in particular in the context of the African Union's initiative to silence the guns in Africa by 2020 and more generally in the implementation of its Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Togo remains committed to promoting, together with other States, the values defended by our common Organization. Nevertheless, we are concerned by the resurgence of nationalism throughout the world and desires for the development, sophistication and use of nuclear and chemical weapons. My country also calls on all States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and adhere to the policies of non-proliferation and complete and general disarmament, which are the only guarantees for harmonious and lasting peace.

Mr. Gastorn (United Republic of Tanzania): I would like to join previous speakers in commending you, Mr. Chair, as well as the other members of the

Bureau, on your well-deserved elections to lead this important structure. I wish to reaffirm my delegation's full support and cooperation as you discharge your important responsibilities.

While I align myself with the statements delivered by the representative of Cameroon and the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of African States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively (see A/C.1/75/PV.2), I wish to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

As the world at large battles through the deadly coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its associated socioeconomic predicaments, we are meeting against the backdrop of a catastrophic global peace and security dilemma for the human race and the environment, which calls for a global solution to the unresolved matter of the disarmament of nuclear weapons. The worldwide spread of COVID-19 reminds us that we need to enhance solidarity within the multilateral system in order to confront our global challenges.

In that same context, Tanzania cordially appreciates all the necessary measures and initiatives undertaken by the United Nations system and the international community to mobilize efforts to address the global pandemic, including by sharing necessary good practices to prevent and alleviate further infections.

The United Republic of Tanzania believes that the total elimination and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons remains a crucial and important element of the maintenance of international peace and security. We therefore commend the continued efforts of the United Nations since 1964 towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

As members may recall, the General Assembly convened a high-level plenary meeting on 2 October to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. At that meeting, the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, reminded us that we continue to live in the shadow of nuclear catastrophe, as some view nuclear weapons as vital to their national security and survival; that the elimination of nuclear weapons is vital to something greater than the fate of any single State: the survival of life on this planet; and that the only way to completely eliminate nuclear risks is to completely eliminate nuclear weapons. We wish to associate ourselves with that call by the Secretary-General.

As we mark seventy-five years since the first-ever deadly atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we must remind ourselves once again that there will never be any winners in nuclear warfare — hence the need for a common position to ensure the total elimination of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

In that regard, the United Republic of Tanzania would like to join hands with other Member States to call on the nuclear-weapon States to fully comply with their legal obligations and unequivocal undertakings to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons unconditionally and in a transparent, irreversible and internationally verifiable manner, as guided by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It is equally important that all non-nuclear-weapon States be provided with universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding assurances by all nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.

I wish to reaffirm that Tanzania is fully committed to supporting and complementing all United Nations efforts aimed at the total elimination of nuclear weapons in compliance with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

While noting the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, Tanzania still welcomes the convening of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty to assess the progress made and devise mechanisms towards the full implementation of the Treaty. We are convinced that the Review Conference will strengthen and emphasize the main pillars of the Treaty as an essential bridge to enhanced international peace and security.

The United Republic of Tanzania joins other Member States in encouraging the use of non-lethal nuclear technology. We kindly appeal to the International Atomic Energy Agency to remain seized of the matter and continue to provide necessary scientific and technical support to Member States. The Tanzania Atomic Energy Commission, in collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Agency, has played a key role in promoting, regulating and greatly improving our peaceful and non-lethal nuclear capacity in various areas, including the mining and energy production industries.

The proliferation of conventional weapons — such as small arms and light weapons, landmines and cluster

munitions — are deemed to be the most immediate security challenge to individuals, societies and States worldwide, fuelling civil wars, organized criminal violence, insurgency and terrorist activities, and thereby posing serious obstacles to sustainable security and development. Therefore, the United Republic of Tanzania, as a signatory of various international legal instruments, reiterates its full commitment to support the international community in its efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects in compliance with the existing legal instruments.

As the world speedily advances into a digital and technological era, Tanzania wishes to use this platform to appeal for multilateral and bilateral cooperation among Member States and international organizations to build and enhance cybersecurity infrastructure, promote public awareness and facilitate greater participation in the global digital economy. We also need to protect our cyberinfrastructure through strong international commitments and legal frameworks providing for the peaceful use of cyberspace.

There is a link between disarmament and development. In that regard, we need to review our national priorities with a view to refocusing resources on achieving sustainable development under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and reducing military expenditure. In that context, we also call upon the nuclear-weapon States to divert their resources towards sustainable development and away from the further modernization, upgrading, refurbishment or life-extension of their nuclear weapons and related facilities.

In conclusion, allow me to underscore the importance of multilateral diplomacy and the concerted political will of Member States towards achieving general and complete disarmament. I wish to reaffirm the full commitment and support of the United Republic of Tanzania, in cooperation with the international community, to making a world free from the non-peaceful use of space, nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction a reality. We urge all Member States to step up their efforts to do the same.

Mr. Mutua (Kenya): Allow me to start by congratulating you, Ambassador Agustín Santos Maraver of Spain, on assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their elections. I assure you of the

support and cooperation of my delegation and look forward to fruitful deliberations under your leadership.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia and the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/75/PV.2). Allow me to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

We gather today in unprecedented times due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which is an unfortunate appendage to the many challenges facing humankind. Even as we embark on a unique session of the General Assembly, the devastating memory of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki lingers on. Seventy-five years later, nuclear weapons remain one of the greatest threats to international peace and security and a danger to all of humankind.

Fifty years after the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the world is witnessing the alarming return of a renewed nuclear arms race, including through the modernization of such arms and their delivery mechanisms. That phenomenon represents to all nations perhaps the ultimate test of our commitment to the spirit of multilateralism and solidarity in confronting the threat of use of nuclear weapons and ensuring a peaceful and secure nuclear-weapon-free world. Kenya shares the concerns of other non-nuclear-weapon States and reaffirms its support for global nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

As a State party to the Pelindaba Treaty, which declared Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we reiterate our long-standing commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It is our conviction that the full implementation of international conventions and treaties aimed at achieving global nuclear disarmament must, as a necessity, remain a priority for all nations. As we look forward to the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT in 2021, we call for revived momentum among all States to implement their disarmament commitments. In particular, we urge the nuclear-weapon States to join in the universalization of the NPT.

As a State party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty since 1970, Kenya supports research and development in nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It is our belief that the pursuit of the development of nuclear energy

should be conducted in accordance with the framework and protocols of the International Atomic Energy Agency. As provided in article VI of the NPT, all countries should promote and cooperate on the peaceful exploitation of nuclear energy, while at the same time working towards complete nuclear disarmament.

Kenya maintains the same level of commitment to peace and security in cyberspace as we do in every other domain. We have demonstrated our engagement and focused stance at every stage of the peace continuum. In conformity with the emerging global principles of international cooperation, the rule of law, confidence- and capacity-building measures and the adoption of norms of behaviour that enable peaceful coexistence among States, Kenya has taken several measures in alignment with relevant General Assembly resolutions and reports of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security.

We see value in the work of both the GGE and the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, and we align ourselves with the view of other Member States that the two tracks find convergence in order to allow efficiency in implementation measures. Kenya has participated in the GGE since 2014, and in the Open-ended Working Group since 2018. Recently, alongside other countries, we joined an initiative designed by Australia and Mexico, under which countries commit to periodically reporting on their progress in adopting GGE norms as a practical outcome of the Open-ended Working Group process.

In our current interconnected world, cyberstability, conflict prevention and capacity-building can never be a one-nation endeavour — a regional approach is critical. Kenya has worked in cooperation with the African Union on the conduct of regional capacity-building and consultation events. We are also active in the East African Community consultations on information and communications technologies and cybersecurity consultations.

In that regard, and in order to mitigate cyberthreats and foster a safer Kenyan cyberspace, my Government established a national cybersecurity management framework in 2012 by creating the Kenya Computer Incident and Response Team and its coordination centre, which collaborates regionally with 54 other national

teams and globally through the Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams — a global association incorporating over 150 national teams. My delegation considers such regional and global collaboration to be key for supporting cybersecurity resilience, conflict prevention and capacity-building.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many lessons in relation to the cyberdomain. It has also shown us that remedies must be open and shared for our common safety. Kenya has therefore enhanced its commitment to both the protection and the responsible management of national and international critical infrastructure. Due to the pandemic, Governments, health and education systems and the private sector have become increasingly dependent on the proper functioning of information and communications technologies and cyberspace in order to maintain their effective operations. Our interdependence when it comes to cyberhygiene has been re-emphasized and is now even more critical. In line with those lessons, Kenya will remain deeply committed to the ongoing international cyberspace policy forums and processes, including the GGE and the Open-ended Working Group, as we work together towards a stable and safe cyberdomain.

My delegation expresses its concern at the ongoing weaponization of outer space. We join other like-minded delegations in cautioning against the use of outer space as a new arena for a new arms race. We call for the adoption of a complementary legal framework that allows for balanced and equal opportunities for all nations to explore outer space in conformity with the principles of non-appropriation and peaceful uses of outer space.

Turning to the issue of small arms and light weapons, my delegation notes that the illicit transfer and trade in small arms and light weapons constitute a serious threat to international peace and security. Kenya has taken important measures to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, including to strengthen our policy and legislative frameworks to address legal loopholes so as to ensure the proper national stockpile management of small arms and light weapons. As Chair-designate of the seventh Biennial Meeting of States Parties to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in 2021, Kenya remains committed

to the Programme of Action and looks forward to the successful outcome of the meeting.

In conclusion, Kenya looks forward to our fruitful engagement in our shared responsibility to build a safer world for the future.

Mr. Duarte Lopes (Portugal): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. I also wish to thank and commend you and the other members of the Bureau for the smooth and effective way in which you are steering the work of this important Committee in such challenging times and under such exceptional conditions.

Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2) and wishes to make some complementary remarks in our national capacity.

My country firmly believes in multilateral cooperation, based on international rules and motivated by a collective commitment to reach consensus. The current challenges to the international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, in particular in the current context of the pandemic, only reinforce our commitment to multilateralism. In that regard, we continue to support the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament and remain fully committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. We think that an inclusive step-by-step process for the reduction of nuclear weapons remains the best approach to ensure progress.

The termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty last year was a major setback, and the extension of the New START Treaty beyond 2021 is now much more pressing. We feel that the possibility for expanding the scope of that particular process is worth exploring.

The opportunity provided by next year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) must not be missed. Portugal will continue to play a constructive role towards achieving the goal of strengthening the Treaty's implementation and fostering nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Portugal continues to support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and we encourage its implementation by all parties. Iran in particular must return to full compliance with its terms.

The complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is necessary. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to, and fully comply with, the NPT, including the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, and to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Until then, the relevant resolutions of the Security Council should be fully implemented.

The entry into force of the CTBT should be a priority, and we urge the States that have not yet done so to ratify it without delay. Also, efforts should continue to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Portugal is a firm supporter of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Technical Secretariat. The confirmed cases of chemical attacks throughout the world are totally unacceptable, and those responsible must be held accountable.

We reiterate the need to address the issue of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference will otherwise continue to lack representativeness.

The full and equal participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament is essential. Continuing to incorporate gender perspectives will be instrumental in revitalizing the disarmament machinery.

Regulating the legal arms trade and fighting the illegal trafficking in conventional arms and ammunitions, in particular small arms and light weapons, is an unavoidable and necessary task. We once again commend 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 stress the relevance we attach to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Portugal encourages all States that have not yet done so to ratify the ATT.

Portugal welcomes the results of the fourth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, held in Oslo last year. We continue to be committed to achieving the goal of a world without anti-personnel mines by 2025.

On new and emerging threats related to lethal autonomous weapons, cyberspace and the militarization of outer space, we should encourage the implementation of norms of responsible State behaviour, transparency and respect for international law, human rights and international humanitarian law.

On cyberspace, we look forward to the forthcoming session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, to be held next March. We hope it will contribute to streamlining the work of the United Nations in that field.

In conclusion, multilateral dialogue leading to verifiable agreements is the best and most effective way forward on disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Portugal will continue to do its utmost in the First Committee and other forums to contribute to a safer world, based on the principles and goals of the Organization.

Mr. Mohamed Laghdaf (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election. We also wish to express our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, and especially welcome the election of the representative of the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt as Vice-Chair.

Mauritania aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, the representative of Egypt and the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of Arab States and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

I would also like to express our deep appreciation and thanks to the outgoing Chair and Bureau for the efficiency and high professionalism with which the previous session of the First Committee was conducted. I must also commend the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Volkan Bozkir, as well as the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, for their great efforts to follow up this important issue and ensure the implementation of the provisions of international conventions and decisions in the field of disarmament, despite the current restrictions worldwide and the suspension of the work of various United Nations entities due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

I wish to note at the outset that the Islamic Republic of Mauritania was one of the first countries to sign all legal instruments in the field of international peace and security. It is also the host country of the headquarters of the Group of Five for the Sahel and this year holds the rotating presidency of the Group, which seeks to protect territorial integrity, promote joint action and

cooperation and ensure peace and security in the Sahel region.

At the seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, held in Geneva in November 2018, Mauritania was ranked among the best-performing States in combating anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war.

Mauritania is also one of the 122 States that have ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which constitutes an important milestone and a key contribution to the goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Mauritania signed its third country programme framework for the period 2020 to 2024 with the International Atomic Energy Agency and has also developed a comprehensive national plan to strengthen nuclear security.

Mauritania supports all international efforts and negotiations aimed at curbing an arms race in outer space. We adhere to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law in our efforts to establish a free, open and secure cyberspace.

Ms. Lefter (Romania), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

Mauritania stresses the important role played by conventions in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the achievement of international peace and security. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world, including through the convening of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which was organized by the United Nations in November 2019 in accordance with General Assembly decision 73/546 and presided over by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. We commend the success and positive outcome of the first session of the Conference, at which a number of important substantive decisions were adopted.

The holding of that session, which coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the twenty-fifth anniversary of its extension, should inspire us all to maintain its momentum and move forward with the implementation of international obligations. We attach particular value to another legally binding instrument,

adopted in 2017, namely, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which reflects the importance of making concrete progress in the field of disarmament in addition to recognizing the direct threat that the proliferation of such weapons poses to international peace and security.

In that context, Mauritania stresses that international peace and security cannot, and will not, be achieved in a world dominated by arms races; in the light of the less than ideal current international situation, disarmament efforts must be continued and redoubled. We also wish to recall that the implementation of article VI of the NPT is the only guarantee that nuclear-weapon States will not continue to adopt military doctrines and that there is an urgent necessity to divert excessive military expenditure and resources towards mitigation of the imminent danger to humankind represented by the proliferation of such weapons.

At a time when human activities have been severely restricted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important for the countries of the world to recall the dangers of weapons in general and weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons in particular, as well as the need to completely eliminate such weapons and mobilize international efforts in favour of a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It is essential that States focus their attention and resources on sustainable development, especially in the light of the critical challenges facing the world today, including the increasing levels of tension and conflict at both the regional and international levels.

In conclusion, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania wishes to take this opportunity to remind the peoples of the world of the dangers of the illicit arms trade and of the need to prevent such illicit weapons, including nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, from falling into the hands of terrorist groups.

We also call for building bridges for communication and joint action, while respecting the sovereignty and specificities of all countries. Let us strive for justice and equality and spread a culture of peace and tolerance among peoples. We must develop an international system that is capable of achieving justice and create a safe and stable world that is capable of addressing the challenges that confront it.

We hope that the work of this year's session will have a successful outcome.

Mr. Al Zadjali (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to congratulate the Chair of the First Committee on his election. We are convinced that his wisdom and leadership will have a positive impact on achieving a successful outcome and wish to assure him and all delegations of our cooperation.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia and the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of Arab States, respectively (see A/C.1/75/PV.2), given that the Sultanate of Oman is a member of both groupings.

My country supports the call of the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for a ceasefire in all regions suffering from armed disputes and conflicts around the world. We hope that all parties concerned will adhere to that call, given its positive effects on international peace and security. We also take this opportunity to reaffirm our confidence in the Secretary-General. We welcome his efforts to advance the work of the Organization in order to make it more responsive to States' needs, thereby enhancing its ability to keep pace with all developments at both the regional and international levels.

The position of the Sultanate of Oman remains firm on the need to adhere to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law based on respect for the sovereignty of States, non-interference in their internal affairs, good-neighbourliness and cooperation, common interests and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We call on all States to commit themselves without reservations to those noble principles and established agreements based on common interests in order to make our world safer and more stable within a framework of mutual trust and joint cooperation, thereby establishing a new era of security and prosperity for all humankind.

My country also supports the call for the creation of a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We stress the importance of achieving the universality of the non-proliferation regime and call on all States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) without delay or preconditions, as well as to subject all their nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Among the initiatives aimed at promoting security and stability is the initiative to establish a zone free

of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. My country welcomes the resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference regarding the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and calls on all States, in particular the Treaty's depositary nuclear-weapon States, to participate actively and positively in translating that resolution into a tangible reality, promoting mutual trust and peaceful coexistence among the countries and peoples of the region.

In that connection, my delegation welcomes the convening of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which was held at Headquarters in New York in November 2019 under the presidency of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. We reaffirm our full support for the convening of the second session of the Conference in 2021 under the presidency of the sisterly State of Kuwait.

My country attaches importance to cybersecurity and the protection of vital institutions and installations from cyberattacks. We therefore call for further international cooperation and information-sharing in that field. We would also like to note that the Sultanate of Oman ranked sixteenth of 175 countries in the Global Cybersecurity Index.

Recent global events have demonstrated the close interdependency among States when it comes to matters of security, requiring us all to contribute positively to the creation of a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. A world characterized by security and stability — rather than tension — requires the political will of all States and a comprehensive vision of our collective security. There is no doubt that the challenges we face are great, but we believe that through cooperation among the States Members of the United Nations, supported by the innovative and facilitating role of the Secretary-General, it is possible to achieve a safe and secure world.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their elections. I would also like to assure the Chair of our full support and wish him every success in his work, in particular under the difficult circumstances imposed by the coronavirus disease pandemic.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, the representative of Cameroon and the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of African States and the Group of Arab States, respectively (see A/C.1/75/PV.2).

Tunisia reaffirms its support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the foundation for nuclear disarmament and the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We stress the importance of achieving the universality of the NPT through the accession of States that are not yet party to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States. We also recall that the credibility of the NPT rests on the balanced implementation of its three pillars of disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We are concerned, however, that the continued lack of progress on nuclear disarmament, as well as the erosion of the international nuclear arms control architecture in recent years, could seriously undermine the NPT.

In order to preserve the credibility of the NPT and ensure its sustainability, we believe it crucial that the commitments made at the time of its adoption and during its Review Conferences be fulfilled, in particular the commitment to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which was one of the conditions for the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995. In that regard, we sincerely hope that the next Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, in 2021, will be successful in establishing clear modalities and a timetable for the implementation of those commitments.

Strengthening the dialogue among the nuclear-weapon States is essential to restore confidence and facilitate negotiations on arms control and nuclear disarmament. In that respect, Tunisia welcomes the resumption of discussions between the United States and Russia with a view to extending the New START Treaty, which is due to expire shortly.

Tunisia also calls on States that have not yet done so, in particular the annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as soon as possible.

From the outset, Tunisia supported the process leading to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and considers it to both complement and strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of

Nuclear Weapons. We hope to see its early entry into force, which will contribute to our goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Tunisia supports efforts to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and has welcomed, on various occasions, the positive momentum created over the past two years at both the inter-Korean summits and the summits held between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which led to the adoption of important political declarations. We note with satisfaction that no new nuclear tests or long-range ballistic missile tests have been conducted since those summits and express our hope for an end to all such acts that cause tension, including short- and medium-range missile tests.

We reiterate our call for the earliest possible start to negotiations on a clear road map for the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which would build confidence among all parties and facilitate a response to calls for a gradual lifting of sanctions.

Tunisia shares the view that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is an important addition to the international non-proliferation architecture and has significantly contributed to reducing tensions around Iran's nuclear programme. We reiterate our call for the full and effective implementation by all parties of the agreement and resolution 2231 (2015).

We also express our support for initiatives aimed at enhancing dialogue and reducing tensions in the region. In that context, I would like to mention the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which held its first session in November 2019, in which all Arab countries and Iran participated in a constructive manner. In keeping with decision 73/546, the Conference will be convened annually at Headquarters until it has concluded the elaboration of a legally binding treaty establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

We believe that the Conference could be used to promote dialogue and confidence-building among the countries concerned, and thereby contribute to a reduction of tensions in the region. It could also pave the way for the eventual creation of a strong regional security mechanism, enabling the establishment of lasting peace and security in the region in an inclusive

and cooperative manner. Notwithstanding the divergent views expressed during the process that led to the decision to convene the Conference, we hope that all invited parties will be able to participate in its future sessions and work together to rid the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction.

Tunisia renews its call for the universalization of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. We deplore the increasing number of cases of the use of chemical weapons in recent years and reaffirm our principled position condemning, in the strongest terms, the use of those weapons by anyone, anywhere and for any reason. We also stress that all those responsible for such crimes must be held accountable. Tunisia reaffirms its support for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and stresses that it is incumbent upon the international community to work collectively and in unity to ensure the continuity, independence and effectiveness of its work.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to exacerbate internal conflicts in many countries, particularly on the African continent and in the Arab world. That trade also undermines regional security and stability, fuelling transnational organized crime and the activities of terrorist groups.

Tunisia, a peaceful country that does not produce or export any kind of weapons, supported the adoption 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 Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Tunisia is also party to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition, which complements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We also supported the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, convinced of the important contribution it can make to solving the problem of the illicit trade in conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons.

Tunisia shares the concerns expressed about the increase in cyberattacks, particularly against critical infrastructure, and their enormous destabilizing capacity. Tunisia reaffirms the applicability of international law with regard to the use of information

and communications technologies by States and, without endorsing the militarization of cyberspace or cyberwarfare in any way, stresses the applicability of international humanitarian law to cyberattacks carried out during armed conflicts.

Pending the conclusion of the ongoing discussions on the precise application of international law in cyberspace, we share the view that urgent efforts should be made to agree on a credible and consensual methodology and means for the attribution of responsibility for cyberattacks. In that regard, we call for the continuation of the open and inclusive dialogue on cybersecurity through platforms such as the Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security.

Tunisia also wishes to underscore that, given the interdependent nature of cyberspace, the collective ability to prevent or mitigate the effects of cyberattacks depends on the ability of each State to prepare and respond. For its part, Tunisia has developed, with the participation of the private sector and civil society, a national cybersecurity strategy, which will be made public in December. The strategy is aimed at improving the country's resilience to cyberthreats by developing its national capacities and legal system, while fully respecting fundamental rights and freedoms and drawing on strengthened international cooperation.

In conclusion, Tunisia wishes to reaffirm the importance it attaches to dialogue, multilateralism and respect for international law in resolving issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security, including in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We will certainly continue to be guided by those principles throughout the remainder of our term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

Mr. Mbon (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I wish to join previous speakers in extending my sincere congratulations to the Chair, assuring him and the other members of the Bureau of my delegation's full cooperation. I also wish to express my best regards to his predecessor, Ambassador Sacha Sergio Llorenty Solíz of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, for a job well done during the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia and

the representative of Cameroon on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/75/PV.2). I would also like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

There is no doubt that, in the context of the unprecedented coronavirus disease pandemic health crisis, persistent disagreements among nuclear-weapon States and the risk of the use of such weapons constitute threats to international stability and security, if not to the very existence of humankind. Seventy-five years after the creation of the United Nations, the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is still very much alive, and yet far from dispelling the spectre of a new conflict. Uncertainties continue to hang over certain disarmament processes. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their illicit trade and trafficking remain at the heart of regional conflicts and fuel terrorism and maritime piracy.

We are all aware that achieving a world free of nuclear weapons is one of the goals of the United Nations. Therefore, Member States have undertaken various commitments through the adoption of resolutions and international instruments to effectively combat the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, which pose a grave threat to international peace and security. General Assembly resolutions have consistently stressed the urgency of achieving a world free of such weapons, which will only expose humankind to a tragic demise.

While progress has been made in reducing existing stockpiles, we must acknowledge the lack of comprehensive cooperation in that area. Indeed, there have been many discussions and negotiations, including on a fissile material cut-off treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, to secure a future with diminishing nuclear threats to the planet.

Other efforts in that regard include the successful conclusion of negotiations on three agreements in recent years: one on anti-personnel landmines, also known as the Ottawa Convention; a second, lesser-known, one on explosive remnants of war; and the entry into force of the international Convention on Cluster Munitions. The Conference on Disarmament was also the forum in which the Chemical Weapons Convention was negotiated. The arms trade, an area of contention, has also been regulated by the Arms Trade Treaty — a

universal legal tool designed to improve the situation surrounding the sale of arms throughout the world.

However, those advances cannot overshadow the challenges that demand greater effort and political will, especially from the nuclear-weapon States. The world is currently living in dangerous times owing to the re-emergence of the Cold War. Meanwhile, the mechanisms for exchange and dialogue that once helped to ease tensions and ensure that isolated incidents did not escalate into full-scale conflict have lost their effectiveness.

I would like to reaffirm my country's commitment to the objective of general and complete disarmament and the dismantling of all nuclear arsenals, while recognizing the inalienable right of all Member States to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

In the field of conventional weapons, my country welcomes the efforts made by the international community to combat the proliferation of, and illicit trafficking in, small arms and light weapons. In that regard, I would like to mention 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, which remain essential tools for eradicating that destructive trade. This is the appropriate forum in which to call for the strengthening of regional and international assistance and cooperation in order to step up control over the flow of such weapons, including their ammunition.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my country's commitment to the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition, Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair or Assembly, also known as the Kinshasa Convention.

My Government's commitment has been further affirmed by the creation of a national commission to combat the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons by decree 2020/65 of 25 March, as provided for in the Convention, the implementation of which contributes to the achievement of the African Union's initiative to silence the guns on the continent by 2020. The convening of the second Conference of States Parties to the Kinshasa Convention, in the Republic of the Congo, following the first Conference, held in Yaoundé in June 2018, is also in line with that commitment.

I cannot conclude my statement without expressing, on behalf of my country, our gratitude to all the bilateral and multilateral partners that are providing support for the implementation of our disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for former combatants.

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chair of the First Committee and the Bureau on the assumption of their duties. Slovakia wishes them every success in steering this prominent body, and I assure them of my delegation's full support.

Slovakia associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2). I would like to make some additional points from a national perspective.

We are celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations this year. However, in the meantime we have been confronted with a scenario that most of us have never experienced before. The coronavirus disease pandemic puts us all under enormous pressure and creates new security challenge for the entire world. It also poses another stress test for multilateralism, in which we are witnessing a dramatic period of deterioration in the security environment and the erosion of the arms control and disarmament architecture, including the blatant violation of well-established international norms. In this uncertain period, we have no option but to remain fully committed to effective multilateralism and the rules-based international system, with the United Nations at its core.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of its entry into force this year. Slovakia unequivocally supports the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and an irreplaceable pillar of international peace and security.

Throughout the five decades of its existence, the Treaty has made, and continues to make, our world safer. We all wish for the forthcoming NPT Review Conference to be successful. As soon as conditions allow, it should commence at the earliest possible date. All States parties must implement their obligations and commitments assumed under the Treaty or undertaken during previous Review Conferences.

We attach great importance to the core mandate of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in particular with respect to the implementation of

safeguards and independent verification and the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We reiterate our view that the comprehensive safeguards agreements, together with the additional protocols, constitute the current verification standard, and we call for their universalization.

The peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including the sovereign right of every country to include nuclear power in its own energy mix, remain of great importance to Slovakia. Slovakia is a staunch supporter of the benefits of nuclear technologies for socioeconomic development worldwide and their contribution to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Slovakia supports a pragmatic and comprehensive approach to nuclear disarmament, based on mutually reinforcing legal instruments and practical measures that take into account the prevailing security environment. In that regard, we support, *inter alia*, disarmament verification cooperation; nuclear-risk reduction measures; greater transparency and dialogue on nuclear doctrines and postures; and other initiatives such as the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative.

For Slovakia, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) would be a crucial step for advancing disarmament and non-proliferation, because it would legally prohibit all nuclear-weapon test explosions and other nuclear explosions. We call on States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay.

Slovakia supports the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of fissile material, in accordance with document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein.

We welcome the strategic stability dialogue between the Russian Federation and the United States being held in Vienna and Helsinki. We very much hope that the New START Treaty will be extended beyond February 2021. We consider that Treaty to be one of the key pillars of global stability and security. The engagement of China in future talks on a new arms control and disarmament framework would be welcomed.

Despite being challenged many times, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as a successful example of multilateral diplomacy, has remained an important

element of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Slovakia supports that nuclear deal and believes in the continued determination of the remaining parties to preserve it. We commend the indispensable role played by the IAEA in terms of monitoring and verification in Iran in the light of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). The full and unconditional fulfilment by Iran of the obligations encompassed in the deal represents an imperative that is inevitable for the safeguarding of the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has clearly and continuously demonstrated its intention to continue its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the CTBT and return to compliance with its obligations under the NPT and the IAEA safeguards.

Slovakia fully supports work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We regret the questioning of the organization's work and activities, mainly with regard to the presentation of the results of its Investigation and Identification Team in Syria. We strongly condemn any use of chemical weapons, regardless of the circumstances. Impunity in that regard must not, and should not, be tolerated.

We condemn the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, who, as confirmed by the OPCW, was poisoned in Russia by a military chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group. We call upon the Russian authorities to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure the impartial investigation of that unfortunate case.

Our ongoing experience with the coronavirus disease pandemic has highlighted biological risks and vulnerabilities. It could serve as the impetus to intensify work within the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). Slovakia reaffirms its support for the BWC.

Slovakia is committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable outer space environment.

We support a free, open, stable and secure cyberspace, in which human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are observed. We think it may be the right time to overcome our differences and start working toward a long-term, open and future-oriented format based on the results of the meetings 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.

Slovakia firmly supports the Ottawa Treaty, the universal ban on anti-personnel mines and the aspiration of achieving a mine-free world. It is necessary to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, including through the implementation of the Oslo action plan. In 2019, Slovakia provided financial support to the United Nations Mine Action Service project in Iraq, which is dedicated to explosive hazard management, training and technical support and risk education activities.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions will celebrate its tenth anniversary, at the second Review Conference is to be held in Lausanne, this year. Slovakia remains committed to meeting its obligations under the Convention, including by destroying its stockpiles of cluster munitions by the stipulated deadline of 1 January 2024.

Slovakia underlines the importance of the effective implementation and universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty, which is the only legally binding international instrument for regulating the global trade in conventional arms and aimed at preventing their illicit trade and diversion.

The Conference on Disarmament (CD), the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, is an indispensable tool of the disarmament machinery despite the deadlock that has lasted for two decades. We welcome the enhanced cooperation and coordination of the CD presidencies through the informal P6+2 format, which could bring much-needed positive impetus into the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

In conclusion, let me express the hope that this session of the First Committee, even under the conditions of the pandemic, will be successful in searching for solutions that will serve the needs of the international community in the areas of disarmament and international peace and security.

Ms. Bavdaž Kuret (Slovenia): Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate the Chair and the other members of the Bureau of the First Committee and assure them of my delegation's full support.

Slovenia associates itself with the general statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/75/PV.2). I wish to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has had an immense impact on the international community. As we deal with the difficult circumstances of the pandemic, we are also faced with a rapidly evolving international security environment and growing pressure on the global non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament architecture. The fragmentation and weakening of international security regimes are worrisome. Polarization and a severe lack of trust among countries remain. Those tendencies should only strengthen our commitment to effective and treaty-based international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. All pressing proliferation issues should be solved by diplomatic and peaceful means.

Slovenia remains committed to our common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. The best and most realistic course to achieve that goal is a progressive one, through the full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Slovenia, as one of 30 States with a full-fledged civilian nuclear programme, attaches great importance to the development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes and the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), particularly its safeguards system, which plays a fundamental role in the implementation of the NPT. We look forward to the forthcoming NPT Review Conference. We should use the extra time provided to lay the groundwork for States parties to strengthen the implementation of all three pillars of the NPT and make the Review Conference a success.

As we all know, the New START Treaty remains valid until February. Let me therefore take this opportunity to welcome the dialogue on strategic stability being held between the United States and the Russian Federation, which commenced this summer. It is our steadfast hope that the New START Treaty could be extended beyond next year.

At the same time, we share the vision that a future arms control regime should include the People's Republic of China. China's engagement would constitute a positive step in the future arms control regime. That is exactly what a powerful country and a responsible nuclear-weapon State should do.

Let me also take this opportunity to renew the call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to the IAEA's inspection regime and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. That could be the first step on the way to fully denuclearizing the Korean peninsula.

We also continue to support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). We therefore call on Iran to return to full compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA and urge all other parties to make serious efforts for the further implementation of that vital international agreement.

Turning to the Chemical Weapons Convention, I would like to express my country's strong support for the Convention and our strong condemnation of any use of toxic chemicals as weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. As a member of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, Slovenia supports the work of the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its contribution to accountability.

The use of nerve agents, most recently in the Navalny case, is unacceptable and must be condemned. Slovenia therefore calls on Russia to fully cooperate with the international community, in particular the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Slovenia has always been committed to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. I am proud to inform members that Slovenia, with its population of 2 million, recently successfully launched and deployed into orbit our first two satellites. We will continue to support efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Allow me to reaffirm the importance of a free, open and secure cyberspace, in which existing norms of international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, as well as the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, are upheld. The Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security

has done outstanding work to date, and the outcome of its recommendations should take that path in their implementation.

Slovenia attaches great importance to the exchange of views within the Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, in particular on how the norms and principles of international law apply to responsible State conduct in cyberspace. We also support the proposal to launch a programme of action for advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace.

Before concluding, let me underline my country's continued commitment to mine action and the goal of a world free of landmines. It was for that reason that, more than two decades ago, the Slovenian Government established an international trust fund for enhancing human security. With the generous support of numerous donor countries, Slovenia is continuing its activities in landmine clearance, including through mine-risk education, victim assistance and rehabilitation and socioeconomic reintegration and other programmes that save the lives of civilians, in particular children.

We welcome the adoption of the Oslo plan of action at last year's fourth Review Conference of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and look forward to its full implementation.

Finally, I would like to underline that Slovenia, as a long-standing promoter of gender equality and women's empowerment, supports initiatives aimed at ensuring the equal and effective participation of women in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Acting Chair: We have exhausted the time available for this meeting. The next meeting of the First Committee will be held this afternoon at 3 p.m. sharp in this Hall, where we shall continue the general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items. I appeal to all delegations to be punctual to enable us to proceed with our work in a timely manner.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.