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First Committee

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Pieris(Sri Lanka)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 90 to 108 (continued)

Thematic discussions on specific subjects and the introduction and consideration of draft resolutions and decisions submitted on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair: The Committee will now call on those delegations that have requested to exercise the right of reply on the cluster “Nuclear weapons”. In that connection, I would like to remind all delegations that the first intervention is limited to five minutes and the second intervention for three minutes.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is compelled to exercise its right of reply to categorically reject the accusations levelled against it, which are far removed from reality and have nothing to do with the actual situation.

As for the right of reply of the European Union delegation (see A/C.1/77/PV.13), we see no need to give any further explanations regarding the referendums in Kherson and Zaporizhzhya in Donbas. We can only say that the results of that plebiscite speak for themselves, and the inhabitants of those regions exercised their legitimate right to self-determination, made a conscious choice in favour of Russia and had the opportunity to independently and freely express their opinion. That has been confirmed by numerous people, including international observers, and such a step is fully in line with the principle of equal rights and the self-

determination of peoples, which is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and in many other documents. We commented extensively on that earlier.

We would also like to respond to a number of allegations that were made about Russia’s alleged violation of the Budapest Memorandum. In that context, we would like to recall that the Memorandum is part of the package of measures that, in the form of a political declaration, imposed obligations equally on all participants. Having signed such documents, Russia strictly complied with them in subsequent years.

However, the United States and other Western countries acted differently. Disregarding the sovereignty of Ukraine, they unceremoniously interfered in its internal affairs in an attempt to permanently sever that country from Russia. They imposed an uncontested Western-oriented future in all areas, including militarily, on Ukraine. When that stalled, the West raised the stakes and facilitated a bloody coup d’état in order to remove the legitimate authorities in Kyiv. The radicals who seized power provoked an acute crisis within the country and fuelled divisions in Ukrainian society to the tipping point. As a result, the existence of Ukraine as a single functioning State was threatened.

In addition, the 1994 measures were undermined by the destabilizing approach adopted by Washington and its allies towards the unbridled expansion of NATO and military expansion of the post-Soviet space to the detriment of Russia’s basic security

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interests. That fundamentally contradicts the content of the Budapest package of measures, which essentially expresses a commitment to the principle of equal and indivisible security, as well as the collective principles of building a European security architecture. For many years, Kyiv itself has also failed to comply with the Budapest commitments, in particular those that involved countering the rise of aggressive nationalism and chauvinism. In Kyiv, nationalism was openly encouraged, including in its radical forms. The glorification of Nazi criminals has become part of the State policy and ideology. It was the rampant national radicalism that forced the inhabitants of a number of regions of Ukraine to protect their basic rights and vital interests by exercising the right to self-determination, as I already said.

Having introduced a deep split in society, Kyiv itself in fact destroyed Ukraine's unity. Internal centrifugal forces, triggered by the Kyiv regime's destructive policy and the harmful intervention of Western countries, therefore led to the start of Ukraine's loss of territorial integrity.

As is known, the Budapest Memorandum was adopted in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear-weapon State. Under the Memorandum, Russia reaffirmed its commitment to Ukraine not to use nuclear weapons or threaten to use them against non-nuclear States. That commitment has always been fully honoured. Russia has not threatened, and is not threatening, Ukraine with nuclear weapons. At the same time, Kyiv's statements about the possibility of reviewing Ukraine's nuclear-free status, which would mean an attempt to acquire nuclear weapons contrary to the NPT regime, gave rise to serious concerns. Given Kyiv's recent statements about the need for preventive nuclear strikes by NATO countries against Russia, that is doubly unacceptable and completely intolerable.

Mr. Song Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is compelled to take the floor to exercise its right of reply in response to the provocative statements made by the representatives of South Korea and Japan (see A/C.1/77/PV.13). My delegation categorically rejects those provocative statements.

Under the current unsettling circumstances, it is essential to look into the root causes of the vicious cycle of the strange situation on the Korean peninsula. To cut a long story short, the persistent act of subservience to

an outside force, a policy of fratricidal confrontation and uninterrupted military provocations on the part of South Korea constitute the root causes. South Korea stands at the forefront of following the heinous hostile policy of the United States in order to stifle our Republic.

Today the South Korean conservative force devises collaboration with the United States against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and translates it into hostile acts, thereby aggravating the situation. The historical facts clearly show that the vicious cycle of the strange situation on the Korean peninsula is the fallout of collaboration of an aggressive nature between the United States and South Korea against Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The sustained hostile policy of South Korea is one of the major causes of the worsening situation. The hostile policy against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea derives from the broader pipedream of obliterating the ideology of our choice, undermining our dignified socialist system and fulfilling the alleged reunification on its own terms. Hostility breeds confrontation, and confrontation exacerbates the crisis, which would in turn provoke a conflict.

The current South Korean policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is overtly a policy of fratricidal strife and war. The current South Korean policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea surpasses those of previous Governments in terms of ferocity and recklessness.

Historically speaking, tensions on the Korean peninsula coincided with the massive joint military drills conducted by the United States and South Korea. By all accounts, those drills are war drills, aimed at igniting the real war at any time and invading the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The much-touted defensive nature of the drills is a deceptive attempt to conceal the aggressive nature and danger of the war-oriented fireplay.

The sustained war military drills in South Korea are the root cause of exacerbating the situation on the Korean peninsula and threatening regional peace and security. We will closely watch the precarious security environment on the Korean peninsula and all military moves of the hostile forces, and we will take all possible strong countermeasures if necessary.

Recently, Japan's military expenditure has been recording the highest-ever levels. It is no exaggeration to say that Japan has transformed itself into a war-capable country. Japan desperately seeks to acquire a long-distance strike capability and enhanced interceptor-missile capability. Worse still, Japan is actively involved in joint military drills with the United States in hotspot areas around the world. Such moves by Japan are derived from the ill intention of realizing the old dream of a great East Asia prosperity sphere. It is noteworthy that Japan quite recently imported a huge amount of plutonium from abroad. The Japanese Government has revealed its intention to use atomic energy technology and a plutonium stockpile for a military purpose. The international community should remain on high alert regarding Japan's dangerous moves aimed at nuclear armament and reinvasion.

Mr. Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have to take the floor to exercise my delegation's right of reply about unacceptable statements by certain delegations about Iran's peaceful nuclear programme.

Unfortunately, certain European countries that have disregarded their obligations concerning the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) continue to ignore the underlying causes of the current situation and present a spurious narrative as to why we are here, attributing certain falsehoods and fabrications to my country.

While Iran's nuclear commitments were connected with the effective lifting of all sanctions, as well as the normalization of Iran's trade and economic relations, the sheer fact is that sanctions are still in place. Furthermore, Iran does not enjoy the economic dividends promised in the deal, let alone the attempts to reopen issues that had been concluded.

Under the JCPOA, other parties are committed

“to ensur[ing] Iran's access in areas of trade, technology, finance and energy” (Security Council *resolution 2231 (2015), Annex A, para. 33*).

Specifically, the United States, in addition to its obligation to lift sanctions against Iran, is explicitly committed to

“mak[ing] best efforts in good faith to sustain th[e] JCPOA and to prevent interference with the realization of the full benefit by Iran of the sanctions lifting” (*ibid.*, *para. 26*).

Let me remind those delegations that, in defiance of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) and in flagrant violation of international law, as well as the Charter of the United Nations, the United States withdrew from the agreement on 8 May 2018 and reimposed unilateral sanctions. However, Iran decided to continue honouring its commitments, validated by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) 15 times, after being promised and assured by the European participants in the JCPOA that they would compensate for the losses that Iran had suffered.

We are continuing our remedial measures because the non-fulfilment of their commitments by other parties continues. The sanctions remain in full force. The maximum-pressure policy is still being pursued, and our people's suffering continues. Nonetheless, as soon as the other parties fulfil all their obligations in a complete, effective and verifiable manner, Iran will immediately reverse all its steps. However, the suffering of our people as a result of the failure of other parties to carry out their commitments is almost completely irreversible.

I would like to stress that all our nuclear activities are entirely consistent with not only our rights and obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, but also the IAEA's Safeguards Agreement. We have responded to all the Agency's questions in a thorough, constructive and cooperative manner.

We have also made clear our views on the claims of the Israeli regime, which are based solely on erroneous and fabricated information. The Israeli regime has done everything in its power to kill the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. We reject and condemn all irresponsible and illegal statements and actions by that illegitimate regime, which, besides committing the core crimes of international law, behaves in total defiance of the prohibition and regulation of both non-conventional and conventional weaponry. That regime, with its track record of terror and disrespect for the non-proliferation architecture, as well as its threats to use nuclear weapons, lacks any moral grounds for preaching about proliferation.

On another point, the proliferation risk posed by the intended transfer of weapons-grade highly enriched uranium and the relevant technology to handle and process such material to Australia by the United States and the United Kingdom under the trilateral security partnership known as AUKUS should not be ignored.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I requested the floor to exercise my right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of Israel (see A/C.1/77/PV.13), which contained baseless accusations and allegations against my country that need to be corrected.

My delegation categorically rejects the accusations contained in the statement made by the representative of Israel. As usual, when the Israeli position is fragile and weak, the representatives of the Israeli entity resort to promoting lies and twisting facts in order to evade accountability for the crimes and acts of aggression committed by that Israeli entity. Its representatives attempt to escape the myriad resolutions adopted against it, both at the United Nations and in other international organizations. The only concern that has been expressed by the overwhelming majority of the world's countries with regard to the Middle East — which needs to be addressed as soon as possible — is the Israeli entity's possession of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

I would like to stress that Syria cooperates constructively with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We have demonstrated the greatest degree of flexibility and spared no effort to resolve outstanding issues, including by agreeing on an action plan to that end. The annual reports of the IAEA on safeguards implementation, the latest of which was issued this year, acknowledge Syria's full adherence to its commitments pursuant to the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. Israel's recognition of its responsibility for its aggression against Syria in 2007 requires it to acknowledge the need to cooperate with the IAEA in order to shed light on the pollution generated by its missiles. Israel's arrogance has even led it to abandon its policy of ambiguity and denial of accountability for its aggression against the sovereignty of the Syrian territories. It now takes pride in that aggression, thanks to the cover provided to it by its allies, who allow it to escape accountability. We condemn Israel's aggression against Syria's territorial sovereignty in 2007, and we call on all States that adhere to international law to denounce and condemn that aggression, which constituted a gross violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We also condemn its use as a platform for attacking Syria.

Israel's recognition of its responsibility for that aggression requires it to cooperate in order to shed light on the nature of the pollution in the affected site.

The statement of Israel's representative is full of lies and hypocrisy, and the accusations therein constitute a desperate attempt to shift attention away from the dangers of Israeli nuclear weapons, as well as to hide the fact that Israel does not adhere to the United Nations resolutions that call upon it to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in particular resolution 487 (1981). Israel's aggressive and criminal record, its disrespect for United Nations resolutions and its violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations should make its representatives feel ashamed, instead of lecturing others about adhering to international law and international obligations.

Ms. Cho Jeogin (Republic of Korea): I regret to take the floor to exercise my right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

With regard to the root cause of the problem, everyone in this room knows which country started the Korean War and which country continues to go down the path of provocation and hostile behaviour. I would like to draw the Committee's attention to the immutable truth that one country continues to blatantly pursue its military ambitions, having launched over 40 missiles this year alone, not to mention its adoption of new legislation to lower the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons. Against that backdrop, the combined defence and deterrence posture is not only a response to such military threats, but it is also the duty of a responsible Government at the very least.

My delegation would like to reiterate that any attempt by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to justify its possession and potential use of nuclear weapons will not be recognized by the international community under any circumstances. As a country that has consistently upheld and defended the Charter of the United Nations, we believe that all Member States should abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions, as enshrined in Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is no exception. My delegation strongly urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to end all unlawful nuclear activities — which are in violation of international law and multiple Security Council resolutions — by abandoning all its existing nuclear weapons and nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. We also urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to stop its

provocative actions and choose a different path by responding to the calls for dialogue. We have always been, and remain, open to dialogue.

Mr. Ichiro (Japan): I regret that I must exercise the right of reply in response to the allegations made by the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea concerning Japan's defence policy.

Under the Constitution, Japan has adhered to the basic precept of maintaining an exclusively defence-oriented policy and not becoming a military Power that poses a threat to other countries. Japan will never change the course it has taken as a peace-loving nation. The purpose of our defence-related expenditure is to enable Japan's Self-defense Forces to carry out their duties and mission to ensure the peaceful lives and livelihoods of the Japanese people, and to contribute to the peace and security of the international community. In that course of action, Japan will continue to ensure great transparency in its defence-related expenditures. Moreover, with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's reference to Japan's position on plutonium, I would just like to highlight that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has already confirmed that all nuclear materials in Japan, including plutonium, remain in peaceful activities under stringent IAEA safeguards.

Mrs. Gerstler (Israel): I am obliged to exercise the right of reply in response to several remarks concerning my country.

The facts are that both the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic are States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that have knowingly and deliberately violated — and continue to violate — that Treaty. Both those actors seek to destabilize the Middle East and threaten its inhabitants. They must immediately and unconditionally provide answers to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Kim In Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): We once again reject the provocative statements made by the representatives of South Korea and Japan. We state clearly that we have never recognized any United Nations resolutions that seriously and flagrantly encroach upon our sovereignty and the rights to development and existence. Disgracefully, South Korea is making futile efforts to distort the nature of the Korean peninsula issue in this forum. To give a recent example, South Korea frantically conducted massive joint

military drills from August through October, with the deployment of the *USS Ronald Reagan* nuclear-powered aircraft carrier task force and other strategic assets of the United States. Worse still, South Korea continues to seek to conduct massive aerial military drills, with the deployment of United States advanced fighter squadrons. More recently, South Korea committed serious provocations along sensitive front-line areas. In response, our military has conducted military drills to send a strong warning to the hostile forces. Although belatedly, the conservative Government of South Korea must admit that it overstepped the limit from the very beginning. South Korea should think seriously about its actions, which may be a danger to itself.

Japan has clearly revealed its wild ambitions of transforming itself into a war-capable country. The bottom line of Japan's defence budget is to introduce long-distance strike missiles. Acquiring such a capability runs counter to the exclusively defensive policy stipulated in Japan's Peace Constitution. On top of that, Japanese policymakers openly argue in favour of re-examining the three non-nuclear principles and introducing nuclear sharing with the United States. Japan must deeply reflect on any dangerous militaristic moves that could invite an undesired effect.

Mr. Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am compelled to take the floor to exercise my right of reply for the second time, in response to the unacceptable statement made by the representative of the Israeli regime. Our position remains in fact unchanged, and we reject all such unacceptable statements. We will not dignify that regime's representative with a longer answer.

Mr. Ichiro (Japan): I also regret that I must exercise my right of the reply once again with regard to the repeated allegations made by the representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I will not repeat what I have already said, but I would just like to highlight, once again, that Japan will continue to make every effort to contribute to the peace and security of the Asian region and the international community as a whole, in close cooperation with its allies and partners. Moreover, nuclear sharing is not allowed in Japan because the Government of Japan adheres to the three non-nuclear principles, under which the introduction of nuclear weapons is not permitted. The Government of Japan does not have any intention of discussing nuclear-sharing.

The Chair: The Committee will now take up the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction”. We have a long list of speakers for this cluster; therefore, I sincerely appeal for the full cooperation of all delegations in respecting the time limit to enable the Committee to avoid falling behind in its schedule.

Before I open the floor, I would like to remind all delegations that the time limit for statements made during the thematic segments is five minutes when speaking in their national capacity and seven minutes when speaking on behalf of a group of delegations.

Mr. Koba (Indonesia): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

The non-fulfilment of the commitments and obligations assumed under the relevant international legally binding instruments, especially those on weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), continues to pose a threat to global peace and security. The NAM States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons (CWC) note with satisfaction the effective operation of the CWC as a comprehensive multilateral treaty that bans an entire category of WMDs, provides for a verification system and promotes the use of chemicals for peaceful purposes. The NAM States parties to the CWC also call for the promotion of international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention, without any discrimination or restriction. They also invite all States that have not yet signed or ratified the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

The NAM States parties to the CWC reaffirm the importance of international cooperation in the field of chemistry for purposes not prohibited under CWC. They recall that the full, balanced, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of the Convention, in particular with respect to economic and technical development through international cooperation, is fundamental to the achievement of its object and purpose. The use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as weapons, anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances, is reprehensible and completely contrary to international law, in particular the provisions of the Convention. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable. The NAM States parties to the CWC attach great importance to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical

Weapons (OPCW) and emphasize the importance of consensus in the decision-making process on matters of substance. The OPCW should be strengthened to deal with ongoing and future challenges within the confines of the CWC, without distorting the OPCW’s mandate to uphold the authority and credibility of the OPCW.

The NAM States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) consider that the Convention represents an important component of the international legal architecture related to WMDs. They also call for the resumption of multilateral negotiations to conclude a non-discriminatory legally binding protocol that deals with all articles of the Convention in a balanced and comprehensive manner in order to sustainably strengthen the Convention, including through verification measures. They further emphasize the need for enhancing — without restrictions — international cooperation, assistance and exchanges in toxins, biological agents, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes, without any discrimination, in conformity with the Convention.

In the context of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and its subsequent resolutions, NAM underlines the need to ensure that any action taken by the Security Council does not undermine the Charter of the United Nations, existing multilateral treaties on WMDs or international organizations established in that regard, or the functions, power and role of the General Assembly. NAM also stresses that the comprehensive review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) prior to the expiry of the Committee’s mandate in November 2022 should strictly abide by the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the relevant international legally binding instruments and the mandate of that resolution. It should also be based on the main thrust of preventing the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery by non-State actors. NAM also stresses that, in working towards the comprehensive review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), efforts should be made to observe the principle of consensus and to conduct that review through open, transparent and inclusive consultations among Member States. NAM takes note of the 1540 Committee’s holding of open consultations on that comprehensive review in New York from 31 May to 2 June 2022, and urges that the views expressed in those open consultations, especially the views expressed by developing countries, be given due attention.

Under this cluster, NAM has submitted draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.11, “Measures to uphold the authority of the 1925 Geneva Protocol”, and would appreciate the support of all Member States for that draft resolution. NAM reaffirms the need to prevent the emergence of new types of WMD, and therefore supports the necessity of monitoring the situation and triggering international action, as required.

Mr. Fuller (Belize): I have the honour to deliver the following remarks on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on the thematic cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction”.

CARICOM aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Threats to international peace and security are rife and of concern to us all. As noted in our statement on the previous thematic cluster “Nuclear weapons” (see A/C.1/77/PV.11), CARICOM is very concerned that, despite our declared intentions as Member States, we are no closer to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. We are equally concerned about the state of play with respect to other weapons of mass destruction.

The use of chemical weapons, by anyone and under any circumstances, is unjustifiable and is contrary to international law. In that regard, CARICOM reiterates its strong support for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (CWC) and for the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the full implementation of the CWC. As the first disarmament agreement that provides for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, the Chemical Weapons Convention has made a significant contribution to the objective of general and complete disarmament and to codifying a universal norm against the use of chemical weapons.

We applaud the progress made in eliminating chemical weapon stockpiles since the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention 25 years ago. The use of chemical weapons poses dire environmental and health consequences. The humanitarian consequences of such uses are insurmountable. In that regard, we affirm the need to ensure that any use of chemical weapons is fully and impartially investigated and that those responsible be held accountable. Accountability may contribute to strengthening the norm against the

use of chemical weapons, as well as a mechanism for offering redress to the victims of such atrocious acts. We must also be cognizant of the need for support and assistance for victims who have been exposed to chemical weapons. Although we have been living in unprecedented times, we commend the OPCW for having continued to make progress, despite the restrictions associated with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, in destroying the remaining declared stockpiles of chemical weapons. CARICOM also takes this opportunity to express its appreciation for the ongoing initiatives of the OPCW geared towards capacity-building in our region, in keeping with the goals of the Convention.

CARICOM also reaffirms its support for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Some 47 years after its entry into force, we consider the constructive and consistent engagement on issues relating to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) to be very important at this juncture, especially given that developments in science and technology are increasing the possibilities with respect to the acquisition, access to and use of biological weapons, including by non-State actors. In that connection, we welcome the convening of the ninth Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention, which will commence next month, and we hope for a successful outcome that will assist in further fulfilling the objectives of the Convention. We also thank the Implementation Support Unit of the BWC and other partners for the assistance provided to our region in building capacity towards the implementation of the Convention.

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges for our region. It has been compounded by the socioeconomic and health impacts of COVID-19, which we have been confronting for the past two years. We are also mindful that our porous maritime and land borders can create added challenges to our peace and security. In that regard, we are concerned about the increasing challenges posed to international peace and security by terrorists and other non-State actors, in particular their possession of any type of weapon of mass destruction. To that end, CARICOM has worked towards the elaboration of a counter-terrorism strategy, in collaboration with the United Nations. We welcome such joint endeavours, which will assist in maintaining peace and security. Despite the challenges

that we encounter, we are committed to fulfilling our obligations in accordance with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Preventing the emergence of new weapons of mass destruction is of concern to us all. In that connection, we welcome the adoption of General Assembly resolution 75/31, entitled “Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons: report of the Conference on Disarmament”. In conclusion, I take this opportunity to reiterate CARICOM’s unwavering commitment to the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and to urge all Member States to heighten their efforts, both individually and collectively, to ensure full compliance with the legal regime governing such weapons.

Mr. Vongnorkeo (Lao People’s Democratic Republic): The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) attaches particular importance to our concerted efforts to address global security challenges in a strategic and holistic manner, including in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation. As the international community strives to overcome the negative impacts caused by the pandemic, other non-traditional security issues — such as terrorism and chemical, biological and radiological threats, among other issues — continue to present significant risks to global security and stability.

ASEAN reiterates its support for the Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament, in particular with regard to ensuring respect for the norms against the use of chemical and biological weapons, which concerns the interests of all humankind. All weapons of mass destruction, whether used intentionally or by accident, can result in severe casualties and cause massive loss of life, damage to property and significant harm to numerous species and biodiversity. ASEAN therefore strongly condemns the use of such weapons by any party, under any circumstances, anywhere, as it constitutes a serious violation of international law. We urge the international community to fully and effectively implement all treaties concerning weapons of mass destruction, as well as Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). In that connection, ASEAN takes note of the holding of open consultations by the 1540 Committee on the comprehensive review of the status of implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), and welcomes the fruitful discussion held at the corresponding workshop for ASEAN States held in Bangkok in September.

With regard to chemical weapons, all ASEAN member States are parties to the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and strictly abide by our international obligations under the Convention. Noting the twenty-fifth anniversary of its entry into force, ASEAN recognizes that the Convention remains one of the most successful disarmament instruments that completely prohibits an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, providing for a verification system and promoting the use of chemicals for peaceful purposes in accordance with international law. ASEAN believes in promoting and achieving the universality of the Convention in order to move forward in the field of disarmament. We therefore urge those States that have not yet signed or ratified the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

ASEAN commends the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for its unwavering efforts to support the implementation of the provisions of the CWC and welcomes the progress in eliminating chemical-weapons stockpiles under the CWC. We strongly believe that the international community should redouble its efforts to strengthen international cooperation in order to eliminate chemical weapons and enhance international support to help all victims suffering from the use of chemical weapons.

As parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), ASEAN notes the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the BWC and reaffirms our commitment to that landmark treaty. We recognize the necessity of multilateral negotiations and note the lack of verification measures, which poses a challenge to the effectiveness of the Convention. We also place great importance on enhancing international cooperation and assistance, as well as exchanging information in the use of toxins, biological agents, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes.

ASEAN remains committed to enhancing regional capacities to address chemical, biological and radiological threats. The achievements of the Network of ASEAN Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) Defence Experts, since its establishment in 2018, have fostered greater regional cooperation in that domain. Within the purview of the Network, ASEAN CBR defence experts have continued to meet and share information and best practices through regular visits, workshops and virtual tabletop exercises in order to strengthen regional preparedness and cooperation against chemical, biological and radiological threats.

Practical cooperation in the ASEAN defence sector has continued to make good progress since its inception in 2006, particularly through the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) platform. Moreover, the ADMM-Plus Chemical, Biological and Radiological Conference was hosted by Singapore earlier this month, with a view to developing a deeper understanding of the risks posed by CBR agents in terrorist acts in the region through the sharing of information and best practices, enhancing cooperation and preparedness against CBR threats and establishing closer networks between regional and international CBR experts.

The Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence established a regional secretariat for South-East Asia in 2013 in order to enhance the capacity of ASEAN member States to mitigate CBRN-related risks. That regional secretariat ensures cooperation and coordination in South-East Asia and supports efforts to identify CBRN risk-mitigation needs, develop national CBRN action plans and formulate and implement regional project proposals. Within the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), workshops on raising awareness and promoting cooperation on CBRN risk mitigation were held in 2018. In addition, the ARF Table-Top Exercise on Response Capabilities to CBRN Incidents was held in Manila in June. The exercise aimed to enhance interoperability and coordination among concerned Government agencies and the international community on how to deal with a CBRN incident.

Let me conclude by reaffirming ASEAN's strong support for the work of the OPCW and the BWC's Implementation Support Unit, while emphasizing the importance of enhanced international support for States parties' efforts to build their national capacity to implement the treaties related to weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Al-Taie (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Group of Arab States aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Arab Group maintains its firm, principled position on achieving a world free of weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, chemical or biological. We give priority to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East in accordance with the relevant international resolutions.

It is also important to recall that the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament identified clear and consensual disarmament priorities, with nuclear disarmament as a top priority. Nevertheless, we have not yet seen tangible progress on nuclear disarmament or the prohibition of nuclear weapons, as has been achieved for chemical and biological weapons.

The Arab Group has actively contributed to efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. We continue to support the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, while working to achieve their objectives and condemning any use of weapons of mass destruction by any party and under any circumstances.

The Arab Group stresses that Israel's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear party will contribute to the universality of the Treaty and to confidence-building, as well as to regional and international security and to enhancing the credibility of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Israel is the only one in the region that has not yet acceded to any of the three treaties related to weapons of mass destruction.

The Arab Group regrets the failure of the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT for the second consecutive time — in 2015 and 2022 — to reach an outcome document. That casts a negative shadow on the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We call for efforts to ensure the success of the eleventh Review Conference by reaching a comprehensive and balanced outcome document that includes clear measures to enhance the credibility and sustainability of the Treaty through the implementation of agreed commitments, especially with regard to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the universalization of the Treaty and the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons.

The Arab States have agreed to make a courageous, goodwill decision to expand arms control measures in the region to include other weapons of mass destruction, as well as nuclear weapons, in order to refute any argument for the possession of nuclear weapons by one party in the region as a means of deterrence. The Middle East region would thereby become the only zone to include all weapons of mass destruction, as opposed to other zones established through regional treaties that include only nuclear weapons.

The Arab Group calls for intensifying international efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. In that context, the Arab Group welcomes the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and All Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held by the United Nations in November 2019 under the presidency of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, pursuant to decision 73/546. We commend the positive outcome of that session, including the adoption of a number of substantive and procedural decisions, as reflected in the Secretary-General's report (A/75/63). We also welcome the convening of the second session, under the presidency of the sisterly State of Kuwait, which succeeded in adopting the rules of procedure for the Conference, establishing an informal working committee to hold consultations between the formal sessions of the Conference and adopting an outcome document. The Arab Group looks forward to the third session of the Conference, to be held under the presidency of the sisterly Lebanese Republic in November.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is proud to deliver this joint statement on behalf of a group of countries on the outcomes of the consultative meeting of States parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), under its article V, which took place in Geneva on 26 August and from 5 to 9 September. This joint statement is being submitted on behalf of Belarus, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, China, Cuba, Nicaragua, Syria and my own country, the Russian Federation.

Belarus, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, China, Cuba, Nicaragua, Syria and the Russian Federation thank the Chair of the formal consultative meeting of the States Parties to the BTWC, under its article V, for his tireless efforts, which made it possible to hold the meeting in a constructive and professional manner in the interests of the proper implementation of the provisions enshrined in article V of the BTWC. We are grateful to the States that took part in this event for their contribution and commitment to resolving the existing situation.

We have to conclude that the questions as to the military biological activities conducted by the United States in the context of the functioning of biological laboratories on Ukrainian territory remain unresolved. It is regrettable that we have not received exhaustive explanations that could completely allay the doubts concerning those activities, and thereby resolve the

situation that had prompted the Russian side to convene a consultative meeting under article V of the BTWC. As we see it, the States parties to the BTWC should continue to share expert opinions and further technical assessments and should transmit their comments and suggestions on resolving the situation to the Convention's ninth Review Conference.

Moreover, in view of the outcomes of the consultative meeting and in order to help resolve the situation, we encourage the use of every opportunity available within the framework of the BTWC, including the mechanism under article VI of the Convention. The outcomes of the event demonstrate the potential for strengthening the BTWC and improving its efficiency. The consultative meeting confirmed the need to resume the negotiations on a legally binding protocol to the Convention, which should be comprehensive in nature and provide for an effective verification mechanism. We hope that the States parties will be able to adopt a relevant decision during the ninth Review Conference of the BTWC.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

Mr. Karczmarz (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The EU candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Monaco and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

The First Committee meets amid a grave threat to international peace and security — Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, which the EU resolutely condemns. Atrocities being committed by the Russian forces, including indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, are causing unspeakable suffering to the people in Ukraine.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery remains a grave threat to international peace and security. Moreover, there continues to be a real risk that terrorists could access weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) or their means of delivery. Compliance with, and enforcement of, international obligations applicable to such weapons therefore remains a fundamental pillar of the global

effort to uphold the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and to prevent an erosion of that landscape.

This year marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The EU welcomes the successful and verified destruction of 99 per cent of the declared chemical-weapons stockpiles. Despite the progress made, the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons is a significant threat to international peace and security. Such an act is always a violation of international law and can amount to some of the most serious crimes of international concern — war crimes and crimes against humanity. In recent years, the world has witnessed the horrific use of chemical weapons in Syria, the United Kingdom, Russia and Malaysia. Ending impunity and ensuring accountability are crucial to restoring the integrity of the established norms. The EU supports collective efforts to that end through the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

We denounce the Syrian Arab Republic's continued violation of its obligations as a State party to the CWC and strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force. In order to regain its rights and privileges under the Convention, Syria needs to cooperate fully with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in order to resolve the pending issues with its declaration, declare the full extent of its chemical-weapons programme and be fully compliant with the Convention.

The EU continues to support the OPCW politically, diplomatically and financially. We remain steadfast in defending the Organization against deliberate and baseless attacks on its integrity and credibility. We reiterate our call upon the States not yet party to the CWC to join the Convention without further delay. The EU will contribute actively to the preparation of the fifth Review Conference of the Parties to the CWC, which will be an opportunity to consider how to further strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

This year, on 10 April, we commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), one of the major pillars of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. We reaffirm our unequivocal support for the BTWC as the legally binding norm against biological weapons and the

cornerstone of international efforts to prevent their development and use. We call on all remaining States to join the Convention. The EU is firmly committed to contributing to the success of the ninth Review Conference, strengthening the Convention and its implementation and improving biosafety and biosecurity globally. The EU regards verification as a central element of a complete and effective disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We encourage the Review Conference to contribute to exploring the issue of verification in greater depth, while taking into account developments in science and technology, as well as the evolution of the threat, and we ourselves stand ready to do so.

The EU is deeply concerned about Russia's disinformation campaigns, which serve only to undermine international peace and security, as well as to impede cooperation and assistance between States parties to those conventions. It is unacceptable that Russia, as part of its attempts to excuse its unjustifiable and unlawful war of aggression against Ukraine, continues to make unsubstantiated and false claims against Ukraine, the United States and others, attacking fully legitimate and laudable capacity-building programmes in the biosecurity domain. Following the article V formal consultative meeting held in Geneva in September, the EU considers that this matter is now concluded.

The EU recognizes that the only existing international independent mechanism for investigating alleged uses of biological weapons is the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. The EU recalls its strong and long-standing support of the Mechanism and provides funding for several projects.

Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) continues to be a central pillar of the international non-proliferation architecture. We expect the ongoing review cycle to further strengthen its functioning.

In 2010, the EU Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative was established as a worldwide capacity-building programme for the mitigation of all risks related to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials or agents.

The EU reaffirms its full support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and other WMDs and their delivery systems in the Middle East.

The EU has been a firm supporter of The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation since its inception. As an integral part of the multilateral non-proliferation architecture, the Code of Conduct is the only multilateral transparency and confidence-building instrument relating to the spread of ballistic missiles, as well as space-launch activities. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Code. The EU strongly condemns the launches of ballistic missiles that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has conducted in unprecedented numbers since the beginning of this year.

The EU recognizes the crucial contribution of export-control regimes towards ensuring a safer and more secure world. In that regard, we deplore the emerging discourse instigated by some Member States that seeks to delegitimize those critical instruments on fallacious grounds. In particular, the EU recalls that the Missile Technology Control Regime plays a crucial role in tackling the proliferation of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and other unmanned aerial vehicle technologies and that all EU member States should be allowed to join that regime. The EU strongly supports all other international export control regimes, including the Zangger Committee, the Australia Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement.

In the interest of time I have delivered a shortened statement. A full version of this statement will be available on the First Committee website.

Mr. Tomlinson (Canada): The legal frameworks established by the international community to ban the possession, development and use of chemical and biological weapons are increasingly being undermined.

In September, States parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) met at the behest of the Russian Federation to hear baseless accusations about allegedly inappropriate biological activities conducted by the United States in Ukraine. We listened attentively to those accusations and paid equally close attention to the responses provided by the Ukrainian and American delegations. Based on the nature and credibility of the materials provided, we reached the unambiguous conclusion that activities supported by the United States in Ukraine were fully consistent with the BTWC and that Russia's allegations are baseless, disingenuous and damaging to the integrity of the Convention.

Russia manufactured and misrepresented long-standing and legitimate cooperation between the United States and Ukraine to support its disinformation charge that they violated the BTWC. In that regard, it is ironic that Russia itself was an active participant in very similar activities as a former member of both the International Science and Technology Centre and the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. Through those initiatives, Canada supported many international assistance projects at biolabs in Russia, including at facilities implicated in the Soviet Union's offensive bioweapons programme, that involved peaceful scientific collaboration similar to that which Russia called into question in Ukraine.

Russia's blatant disinformation is not limited to biological weapons. In order to justify President Putin's illegal and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia has also accused Ukraine of developing chemical weapons and has alleged that Ukrainian forces are committing chemical provocations by sabotaging the civilian chemical industry. Russia has gone so far as to imply that inspectors from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) could be involved in staging chemical attacks in order to blame Russia.

(spoke in French)

Those allegations are false. Ukraine continues to be in full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

In contrast, Russia has failed to satisfactorily explain the use of a Novichok nerve agent in the attempted assassinations of Sergei Skripal in 2018 and Alexei Navalny in 2020. Two years ago, Mr. Navalny was poisoned on Russian soil with a Russian-made nerve agent. No attempt has been made by the Russian authorities to investigate. That raises doubts about Russia's compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The intent of Russian disinformation is clear — to undermine decades of collective efforts to eliminate two entire categories of weapons of mass destruction. That blatant behaviour comes on top of Russia's actions in the OPCW and the Security Council in order to shield the Al-Assad regime from responsibility for its numerous violations of the Convention.

Syria's violations of the Convention are as blatant as they are extensive. It has deployed chemical weapons even though its declared stockpiles had been verifiably destroyed, and it has virtually stopped working with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in order to clarify the serious outstanding issues in its declaration. It is our collective duty to insist that Syria continue to work with the Technical Secretariat.

The Review Conferences of those two Conventions are imminent. We sincerely hope that those events will be an opportunity to strengthen the BTWC and the CWC, with a view to consolidating those regimes and ensuring that none of those categories of weapons of mass destruction are used again.

However, hope alone does not guarantee success. That is why we need to redouble our efforts to strengthen other key non-proliferation mechanisms for chemical and biological weapons, including the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction and the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. With regard to the latter, current events underline the imperative of preserving the integrity and independence of the Mechanism while taking active steps to better enable and equip the mechanism to respond if called upon.

Ms. Rakhmatia (Indonesia): Indonesia aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The use of all weapons of mass destruction by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances cannot be justified. It is inhumane, morally disgraceful and legally unacceptable.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention also prohibit the use of those weapons. Those two important Conventions are essential components of the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Strengthening the disarmament architecture for all other weapons of mass destruction must therefore also be our top priority.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is one of the most successful multilateral instruments in disarmament and non-proliferation. However, the threats to international peace and security arising from the use of chemical weapons remain visible. The only guarantee to avoid the use or threat of use of weapons

of mass destruction is the complete elimination of such weapons. Indonesia therefore stresses the need for the remaining possessor countries to expedite their total destruction before the determined deadline.

The destruction of all categories of chemical weapons under strict verification should continue to be accorded top priority. Indonesia also underscores the important role of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in supporting States in implementing their obligations under the CWC. For us, it is paramount that the OPCW perform its duties free from politicization and maintain its impartiality and professionalism in undertaking its mandate.

Parallel to that, international cooperation and assistance in chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention should be promoted without any discrimination or restriction.

Indonesia also maintains its unequivocal commitment to upholding the norms against biological weapons. The existence of biological and toxin weapons as well as their potential proliferation and misuse constitute a growing threat to international peace and security. In that regard, we need to continue our endeavour to strengthen the Convention.

Indonesia calls for the resumption of the multilateral negotiations on a legally binding protocol dealing with all articles of the Convention in a balanced and comprehensive manner.

The lack of a compliance mechanism or verification regime, which remains the major weakness of the Convention, must be addressed. We also need an effective mechanism for cooperation and assistance to ensure the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of article X.

While maintaining those calls, Indonesia recognizes the value of the intersessional mechanisms for promoting the objectives of the Convention. That includes the confidence-building measures report, which serves as a provisional tool for transparency. In the lead-up to the Ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, Indonesia encourages countries to galvanize political resolve to strengthen the resourcing, institutionalization and operation of the Convention.

Finally, Indonesia takes note of the conduct of the comprehensive review of the status of implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which took

place in May. Indonesia would like to reiterate our view that the inclusive process of the review is important and that opportunities must continue to be given to Member States to engage in the process. We also maintain our view that that resolution should neither duplicate nor contradict but, rather, complement existing multilateral mechanisms on disarmament and non-proliferation.

In conclusion, Indonesia calls for dialogue and consensus to be at the forefront of our work. We wish to assure the Committee of my delegation's full support for and readiness to engage constructively and to do its utmost for the attainment of a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Ali (Egypt): Egypt aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Group of Arab States.

The first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament confirmed the effect of disarmament on international peace and security. The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2021 represents a historic step in terms of prohibiting nuclear weapons, as chemical and biological weapons are prohibited by their respective Conventions. It also establishes a customary rule in international law with regard to prohibiting nuclear weapons.

Egypt joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in good faith and has implemented all its commitments under the Treaty. Egypt joined the consensus on the indefinite extension of the NPT at the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT on the understanding that the package included the 1995 resolution on establishing a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone, which has not been implemented to date. Egypt also was the first country in the region to propose the inclusion of other weapons of mass destruction in connection with the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Egypt calls for immediate action to face the strategic imbalance in the Middle East, which is due to persistent attempts by one State to impede efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. That persistence impedes the achievement of security and stability in the region, which leads to more conflicts, an arms race, instability, international intervention and the absence of sustainable peace.

Egypt condemns any use of weapons of mass destruction, by any side, under any circumstances. In that regard, Egypt has always supported the implementation

of international resolutions, especially Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), to avoid any illegal diversion of weapons of mass destruction to sub-State actors and terrorist groups.

We highlight once again the double standards in the position expressed by some Member States in calling on certain other Member States by name to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention while failing to call on the only Member State in the Middle East that is not party to the NPT to join it without delay. They become hesitant when it comes to supporting the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, under the pretext that the political and security circumstances in the region are not yet conducive to such a step.

In fact, many of the Member States that call for universal adherence to the Conventions on chemical and biological weapons own nuclear weapons or are under the so-called nuclear security umbrella. Those same Member States claim that the circumstances are not propitious yet for disarmament and refuse to deal on an equal footing with nuclear weapons on the one hand and chemical and biological weapons on the other in terms of prohibiting their use and ownership, although nuclear weapons are the most destructive weapons of mass destruction and run counter to the main principles of humanity and international humanitarian law.

Egypt reminds those Member States that those principles are indivisible and that the security of some Member States is not more important than that of others, as all Member States are equal in terms of rights and sovereignty. We advise those Member States to reconsider their positions, which reflect a clear case of the use of double standards.

Ms. Petit (France) (*spoke in French*): In complement to the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union, I wish to stress that respect for the norms of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by all States is vital. We must collectively reject the trivialization of proliferation crises and the impunity that certain States believe they enjoy.

The first concern I wish to express is that the taboo on the use of chemical weapons, which we had thought inviolable, has been broken several times, in Syria, in Russia, in Malaysia and in the United Kingdom.

First, the Syrian regime refused to cooperate and continues to obstruct the outstanding work of the

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Syria must fulfil its international obligations if it wants to regain its rights and privileges, which were suspended by the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC in April 2021.

We will follow very closely the conclusions of the next two reports of the Investigation and Identification Team on the attacks on Douma and Marea. Another example of the use of chemical weapons by a State party, this time by Russia, was the attempted assassination of Alexei Navalny in August 2020 using a Novichok nerve agent, as confirmed by the OPCW.

We emphasize strongly that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances. Along with our partners, we will continue to support the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, so that the perpetrators of those attacks can be identified and held accountable.

Secondly, we must continue our efforts to bolster the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The Ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention is taking place even as Russia continues to instrumentalize its provisions to spread baseless accusations against Ukraine and the United States.

The Conference is important in order to boost the relevance and credibility of the Convention, which, I wish to recall, is a cornerstone of the norms of biological non-proliferation. In order to make it more operational, France would like to make three concrete proposals aimed at enhancing transparency and establishing trust between States parties; facilitating assistance in cases of violations of the Convention; and, finally, promoting international cooperation on biosafety and biosecurity. We hope for the support of all States parties on those proposals and once again wish every success to Italy in its capacity as President.

We will also support the independence of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons, which is an international instrument allowing for investigations into the possible use of chemical and biological weapons and which aims at ensuring respect for international norms. We cannot accept the flexibility and efficiency of that mechanism being called into question.

Regarding nuclear issues, France regrets Iran's decision not to enter into the agreement presented by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Coordinator at the beginning of August aimed at allowing for the full implementation of the JCPOA. We call on Iran to end its nuclear activities, which run counter to its commitments, and to cooperate without further delay with the International Atomic Energy Agency on the separate safeguards agreement, in accordance with its international obligations. Our goal remains the same: Iran must never acquire nuclear weapons.

France also remains concerned by North Korea's continued proliferation activities. We must continue our efforts to ensure the strict, complete and universal implementation of sanctions so that the North Korean regime finally agrees to dialogue and completely, verifiably and irreversibly abandons its proliferation programmes. The illegal development of vectors, their optimization and their spread are threats to regional and international stability. We call on all States to join The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation and to adhere to Missile Technology Control Regime directives. We will continue our efforts under the Proliferation Security Initiative, and we are in favour of bolstering the role and expertise of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004).

Finally, the threat of radiological terrorism has not disappeared, and it is crucial to continue international cooperation in the face of that common challenge. That is why France is co-sponsoring, along with Germany, a draft resolution (A/C.1/77/L.64) on that issue in the First Committee.

Mr. Turner (United States of America): This marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). It is most regrettable that the threat and use of chemical weapons continues to be an issue of grave concern to the global community. We must remain resolute in our resolve to reverse that trend and reaffirm the world's commitment to end, once and for all, the use of chemical weapons. There must be no impunity for those who use them.

The Al-Assad regime has flouted its international obligations and disregarded the standards of basic humanity by repeatedly using chemical weapons against its own people. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Investigation and Identification Team has attributed four separate

chemical-weapon attacks to the Al-Assad regime. That is in addition to the four separate chemical-weapons attacks attributed to the Al-Assad regime by the former OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism.

Further, the Syrian regime has yet to permit the Declaration Assessment Team to return to Syria in order to resolve the discrepancies in its CWC declaration in order to help ensure the verified elimination of Syria's chemical-weapons programme —

The Chair: I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on a point of order.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): If you would, Mr. Chair, I would like you to draw the attention of the current speaker to the need to use diplomatic language, address countries by their official names in the Committee and refrain from using any words that are not appropriate for a diplomatic speech.

Mr. Turner (United States of America): The United States reaffirms our condemnation of Russia's poisoning of Alexei Navalny with a nerve agent of the Novichok group, and we again urge Russia to answer the international community's questions regarding that attack. We also condemn Russia's chemical attack against the Skripals in Salisbury, United Kingdom.

Russia needs to explain those uses of chemical weapons, declare its remaining chemical-weapons programme and verifiably destroy any chemical weapons it continues to possess, including Novichok nerve agents. In connection with its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, Russia has also falsely accused Ukraine of using or planning to use chemical weapons against Russian troops while providing no evidence of that whatsoever. The United States calls on Russia in the strongest possible terms to end its massive disinformation campaign.

Turning now to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), earlier this year the States parties to the BWC proudly recognized the fiftieth anniversary of the opening for signature of that extraordinary agreement, which would solidify the view that States parties must exclude completely the possibility of biological agents and toxins being used as weapons.

We believe that the BWC forum of States parties and the Convention that they are entrusted with are at a momentous crossroads. The coronavirus disease pandemic has reminded us all with tragic clarity of

how vulnerable we are to infectious disease and that biological outbreaks do not respect borders. We must take all biological threats, whether natural, accidental or deliberate, seriously, and do so together.

While some countries have sought to undermine the BWC through disinformation and illicit activities, we cannot allow meaningful progress to elude us yet again. States parties must take concerted action to meet that challenge.

The upcoming BWC Review Conference is a key inflection point for moving forward. States parties must embrace that moment to chart a new course for the BWC that adapts to the radically changed landscape of the twenty-first century; builds confidence and compliance; strengthens implementation, including enhancing international cooperation and assistance; and helps deter the development, acquisition, stockpiling and use of biological weapons.

The United States fully supports the proposal by Canada and the Netherlands for an expert working group. We judge it to be a serious approach that will enable progress in the short run while also creating a path for developing approaches to the more challenging questions of verification and compliance.

Biological weapons are unacceptable, and we call on all States parties to join us to strengthen and revitalize the Convention that embodies that belief. Now is the time to come together to achieve that solemn responsibility for the sake of all humankind.

We will respond to the unfounded allegations made by Russia against Ukraine and the United States on behalf of a number of States in a right of reply, although I note that a number of our colleagues have already addressed them extensively.

Ms. Morriss (New Zealand): New Zealand remains resolute in our rejection and condemnation of any use of chemical or biological weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances.

We are deeply concerned by proven cases of the use of chemical weapons, which are an affront to the global rules and norms that we have collectively committed to preserving and defending. New Zealand reinforces our strong support for the critical work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in identifying and attributing chemical- weapons attacks. The OPCW works tirelessly to fulfil its mandate and makes it possible for the States parties to the Chemical

Weapons Convention to uphold our treaty and hold the line against the kind of atrocities that we have witnessed in recent years.

We must ensure that the OPCW continues to have the proper support it needs to fulfil its mandate. New Zealand has made two voluntary contributions to the OPCW this year, and we call on all States parties to provide the political and financial support that our Technical Secretariat requires, including the payment of assessed contributions on time and in full.

We also underline our ongoing commitment to the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons and the work that it does to hold to account those who dare to use those repugnant weapons.

We continue to urge the Russian Federation to cooperate fully with the international community and the OPCW to provide answers regarding the poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny.

We also remind the Syrian Arab Republic of its obligations following the adoption of the decision addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic and urge it to comply with the decision of the Conference of the States Parties at the OPCW without delay.

Notwithstanding those challenges, we look forward to continuing our cooperative efforts to advance peace and international security through the OPCW and other relevant forums.

In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the Governments of Australia and Malaysia to host a Subregional Forum on National Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention for Pacific Island States. We are delighted that the Director-General of the OPCW will attend. Our region's commitment to that shows how seriously we take the task of upholding the Chemical Weapons Convention; it is the responsibility of all States, large and small.

We also welcome the productive discussions that have taken place in the lead-up to next year's Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and New Zealand stands ready to work collaboratively to strengthen and safeguard the Convention to ensure that it continues to deliver for the international community in the decades ahead.

Turning to biological weapons briefly, the Ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), scheduled to take place later this year, provides a timely opportunity to strengthen that important element of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. We encourage all BWC States parties to participate constructively in pursuit of that aim.

For too long, the Convention has lacked robust means to ensure confidence in compliance with its prohibitions. In that respect, we commend recent initiatives such as the joint United States, United Kingdom, Canadian and Dutch proposal for the establishment of a two-year experts' working group to explore ways to strengthen the BWC. New Zealand was pleased to co-sponsor that initiative and encourages others to do the same. It is our hope that through initiatives like that one, the BWC States parties can further realize the Convention's potential to contribute to international security. We also support efforts to strengthen the BWC's capacity to review the implications of scientific and technological developments for its effectiveness.

Ms. Hill (Australia): This twenty-fifth anniversary year of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a timely opportunity to further strengthen global endeavours to rid the world of chemical weapons once and for all. Despite the progress that has been made under the Convention, the world continues to face a persistent threat from those weapons.

In that context, we underscore our continuing strong support for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and commend it on its professionalism, impartiality and integrity. Australia is continuing to work to support the ability of the OPCW to respond to chemical-weapons use and to hold to account those who use chemical weapons or those who command, enable or shield those who use chemical weapons.

Australia fully supports the work of the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team in Syria and applauds the thorough investigations carried out by its experts. It is imperative that Syria comply with its obligations under the CWC and ensure the complete dismantlement and destruction of its chemical-weapons programme.

We reaffirm that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable and prohibited under international law.

Biological threats do not respect State borders. Use of biological weapons anywhere would be globally disruptive and have a severe impact upon all States. In this fiftieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), we must recommit to ridding the world of those weapons.

We stress the importance of working together towards a meaningful BTWC Review Conference later this year. The conference offers an opportunity to reaffirm the global norm against biological weapons and to strengthen the Convention. Australia is pleased to be co-sponsoring the proposal put forward by Canada and the Netherlands regarding the establishment of an expert working group, which we think represents a constructive way forward for the BTWC.

Australia strongly supports the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons. The Mechanism is a key component of the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, and it is critical that its independence be preserved.

Australia will continue to call out those who spread disinformation around biological weapons; seek to abuse the mechanisms of the BTWC and CWC; or undermine the work of the OPCW. We are greatly concerned by the Russian Federation's unsubstantiated claims about chemical and biological weapons, including claims against Ukraine and the United States. We call on the Russian Federation to end its disinformation campaign.

Australia shares the vision of a world free from weapons of mass destruction. Australia fully supports and actively participates in multilateral export-control regimes, which support States in implementing their obligations under non-proliferation treaties and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). That helps to ensure that goods and technologies used in the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) do not get into the wrong hands and, in doing so, makes us all safer.

Australia is proud to serve as the permanent Chair of the Australia Group. The Group aims to ensure that trade in sensitive dual-use goods and technology does not contribute to the production or proliferation of chemical or biological weapons while facilitating legitimate trade. That is achieved through the harmonization and coordination of export controls and best practices, as well as information-sharing. Importantly, the Australia Group Chair and other

participating countries also undertake extensive international outreach to explain the Group's activities and to support and encourage non-Group members to implement similar non-proliferation measures.

At a time when some States and non-State actors continue to seek to acquire, develop or use WMD capabilities, it is vital that all States uphold their non-proliferation obligations and work cooperatively to counter the threat that weapons of mass destruction pose.

Mr. In Den Bosch (Netherlands): In addition to the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union, the Netherlands would like to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

The year 2022 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention's (BTWC) opening for signature and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention's (CWC) entry into force.

As it stands now, we will witness the complete destruction of all declared chemical-weapons stockpiles in a year's time. The elimination of an entire class of weapons of mass destruction is a unique achievement, one that has been made possible by the tireless and years-long efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Regrettably, we cannot yet breathe easy, as we have witnessed a disturbing re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons in the past decade. Syria has repeatedly used chemical weapons against its civilian population and still needs to resolve, in full compliance with the OPCW, the pending issues. We should also not forget the assassination of Kim Jong-nam or the attempts on the lives of Sergei Skripal and Alexei Navalny. On top of that, Russia has been conducting a disinformation campaign that includes unfounded allegations about the possible Ukrainian use of chemical weapons, even as Russia itself is waging an unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine.

Not all is doom and gloom, though. The Netherlands congratulates the OPCW on its important efforts to prevent the use and re-emergence of chemical weapons, and we look forward to the further strengthening of its work. To continue the crucial work of the OPCW, we urge all OPCW member States to vote in favour of the current budget proposal at the upcoming Conference of the States Parties.

Looking ahead, the Netherlands will be chairing the Fifth Conference of the States Parties to the CWC in 2023. We hope that the Review Conference will lay further groundwork for and give direction to the important work of the Technical Secretariat.

As the coronavirus disease pandemic has illustrated, it matters little in practice whether pathogens are spread deliberately, accidentally or due to natural causes. After all, diseases do not respect international borders. That is one more reason why the international community should take serious steps to address biological threats.

The Netherlands attaches great importance to the BTWC and considers it the fundamental pillar for biosecurity and biosafety. Therefore, the Netherlands is deeply disappointed by the Russian Federation's attempts to call into question the important and legitimate biological-threat-reduction programmes in Ukraine. Following the conclusion of the Article V Formal Consultative Meeting held in Geneva in September, the Netherlands considers that that matter has now been concluded.

In the spirit of international cooperation, we continue to take concrete steps to advance biosecurity and biosafety. We are open to collaborating on projects and initiatives that increase health security, biosafety and biosecurity and are actively looking for new partners in that respect.

Furthermore, the Netherlands is determined to contribute to a successful outcome of the Ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the BTWC, and we call on all States parties to work together in a spirit of constructive cooperation.

We would like to underscore the importance of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons, as it is the only independent international mechanism to investigate alleged uses of biological weapons.

The differential gendered impact in biochemical safety and security is frequently overlooked. Research has suggested that women and girls face different and sometimes greater risks of physical, psychological and social harm when faced with chemical and biological accidents or weapons use. Concurrently, women remain underrepresented in arms-control and disarmament diplomacy, which leads to the exclusion of their perspectives and knowledge. Just, sustainable and effective policy responses in the field of biochemical

safety and security are therefore dependent on the application of a gender lens in our work as well as equitable gender representation.

In conclusion, the CWC and the BTWC are as indispensable as ever in our collective pursuit of a safe and healthy world. To that end, we call on States outside the Conventions to accede to them without delay, and we urge States parties to the Conventions to continue to work towards their success.

A more detailed version of this statement will be uploaded.

Mr. Dzwonek (Poland): Poland fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union. I would like to highlight a few issues in my national capacity.

As in previous years, Poland would like to use the opportunity offered by the debate on "Other weapons of mass destruction" to draw everyone's attention to the need to strengthen our efforts aimed at promoting the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which started in February, has grossly violated the Charter of the United Nations and undermined global security and the rules-based international order, leading to devastating consequences for the entire world. The dramatic events in Ukraine have clearly shown that security cannot be taken for granted and that the prevention of conflicts and the unlawful use of military force in international relations, especially the use of weapons of mass destruction, should be constantly at the centre of our attention. We must therefore closely follow the developments in Ukraine and be ready to act swiftly and decisively in case of any violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Our message should remain strong and clear: we will continue to stand together to preserve international standards and norms against the use of chemical weapons, and there is no acceptance by us, nor will there ever be, of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. Our focus should be equally on investigating all instances of the use of chemical weapons and ensuring that there is no impunity for those who resort to the use of such weapons or contribute to their development, as well as on preventing the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons. All perpetrators of such crimes should be held accountable.

The CWC bedrock — the complete prohibition of chemical weapons — needs to be safeguarded, and we must be able to respond resolutely to any attempts to challenge or undermine the integrity of the CWC or the credibility of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Today more than ever, we need to convey a powerful and unambiguous signal of support for the CWC as well as for the OPCW leadership and its staff in their efforts to promote the full implementation of the Convention and verify that States parties fully comply with the obligations assumed.

The latest draft resolution (A/C.1/77/L.55) on the implementation of the CWC, which Poland traditionally introduces in the First Committee on an annual basis, offers an excellent opportunity to convey that message.

As we have all along, we have been making our best efforts to organize an open, inclusive and transparent process in preparing the updated text of the draft resolution. Our *modus operandi* regarding introducing changes to the draft is well known. Wherever possible, we have tried to preserve the agreed language of the draft resolution, adding only a few new elements that we felt were necessary in order to maintain the relevance of the draft resolution and reflect the latest developments of the utmost importance for the Convention and the OPCW.

We are pleased that this year once again the consultations on the draft have shown that it has generated tremendous interest. Let me express our gratitude to all delegations that participated in those discussions and hope that the draft resolution submitted will find general acceptance in the Assembly.

Mr. Kvalheim (Norway): The global conventions to prohibit chemical and biological weapons are foundational pillars of our non-proliferation architecture. Let me therefore reiterate what was stated during the general debate: we cannot allow those pillars to be eroded by blatant violations or allow the conventions to become arenas for false accusations.

Lately, we have seen Russia make unfounded allegations of biological weapons programmes in Ukraine. Russia has done so not only in the Security Council but also by triggering article V of the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention (BTWC). It is intolerable to use that mechanism to assail the international assistance encouraged under article X, which is a cornerstone of that Convention.

We know better than ever that cross-border cooperation is crucial in strengthening our collective resilience to biological threats. It is therefore imperative that we speak out forcefully and resolutely against attempts to falsely frame peaceful cooperation and assistance activities as a form of non-compliance.

Norway remains steadfastly confident in the work of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its Director-General. We firmly reject any efforts to discredit their important work.

The OPCW and the United Nations have together attributed eight cases of the use of chemical weapons to the Syrian authorities and two cases to the so-called Islamic State.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to close the 20 outstanding issues from its initial declaration on its chemical-weapons programme. Norway supports the decision made at the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) last year to suspend certain of the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic.

We continue to urge the Russian Federation to conduct a thorough investigation of the circumstances surrounding the poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny, share the findings of the investigation with States parties to the CWC and bring those responsible to justice.

Following the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Norway has joined the European Union in sanctioning Russia. That includes a ban on exporting chemicals that can be misused for manufacturing chemical weapons.

The independence of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons must be preserved. Its impartiality and independence are essential. The Secretary-General has ample opportunity to update the guidelines for the Mechanism should he see the need. Norway therefore sees no reason for Member States to initiate an updated procedure, as is proposed in draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.69.

For the upcoming Review Conferences of the Biological and the Chemical Weapons Conventions, respectively, we should move beyond the bare minimum of reaffirming our commitment to them. Compliance is key to upholding the strength and credibility of the conventions, and concrete actions to ensure compliance are needed.

At the same time, we must define practical ways to increase international cooperation and assistance, in tandem with scientific and technological developments. That work will require strong partnerships with civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.

Mr. Francese (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union, and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Italy remains fully committed to effective multilateral action against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, which are a growing threat to international peace and security. Securing sensitive materials, especially from access by terrorist networks, and implementing effective export controls continue to be major challenges. Those challenges point to the need for the universal and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). We call upon all States that are not yet parties to ratify or accede to those Conventions without delay and without conditions.

Italy believes that the international community needs to invest more resources in the international architecture dealing with biological weapons. The coronavirus disease pandemic has shown how important it is for us to work together to improve global biosecurity and biosafety. In that regard, the BWC is of the utmost importance, and every possible effort should be made to strengthen its regime and ensure its full and effective implementation.

The upcoming Review Conference represents a key opportunity to take stock of the work that the States parties have conducted during the intersessional period and to build the basis of our collective engagement in the years to come. Nevertheless, it is difficult to ignore the important challenges that we must face, since we find ourselves in a situation that is far from ideal.

Dialogue and flexibility are more essential than ever. We stand ready to cooperate with all States parties to achieve a common understanding and to identify a strong outcome that will outline very clearly our goals for the next review cycle as well as the most effective way to concretely strengthen the Convention.

It is time for us to draw a line on the story of the BWC, putting an end to reciprocal recriminations about its past and opening a new chapter in the future of the

Convention. The Review Conference represents an extremely important opportunity, and the international community cannot afford the price of failure.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the CWC, a crucial instrument of the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Italy remains firmly committed to supporting the CWC and the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and looks forward to the fifth Review Conference, which will be an opportunity to consider how to further strengthen the implementation of the Convention and counter the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

We reaffirm the need to ensure full compliance with the CWC and the 1925 Geneva Protocol. The international community has a shared responsibility to enforce the prohibition of chemical weapons and support the international chemical non-proliferation regime, which is essential for international peace and security.

We are deeply concerned by the repeated use of chemical weapons in recent years. We condemn in the strongest possible terms their use by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. We must respond to that alarming trend by ensuring accountability and continuing to take a clear stance against impunity for such heinous crimes.

Italy remains deeply concerned by the increasing risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors, particularly terrorist networks. That is why we support the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), including by increasing national capacities in the implementation of non-proliferation measures.

We also attach great importance to the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons, the only existing framework that provides for an investigation of the alleged use of biological weapons, which has successfully worked in the past.

A longer version of this statement will be published online.

Mr. Peñaranda (Philippines): The Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

No aspiration or ambition can justify the use of weapons that annihilate indiscriminately and completely. Those weapons of death put everyone at mortal risk, especially if they fall into the hands of terrorists.

Thus the Philippines is steadfast in its commitment to upholding, enriching and strengthening the global governance structures that prohibit the use of weapons of mass destruction and prevent their proliferation. Those exigencies emphasize the necessity of robust strategic trade management at the national level and international cooperation in reinforcing global non-proliferation norms.

We participate in the processes at all levels to effectively and comprehensively implement the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the latter of which marks its fiftieth anniversary this year. We continue to pursue regional cooperation to advance the goals of those conventions. Together with the United States and the Republic of Korea, we hosted this year a table-top exercise on response to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons within the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum.

To that end, we have established a Strategic Trade Management Office that implements our relevant non-proliferation obligations; here I am talking about our commitment to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). We benefit from multilateral export-control regimes, which are an essential component of the global non-proliferation architecture.

Weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and related equipment and technology are rapidly developing and becoming more sophisticated. National strategic trade controls should continuously respond to evolving threats to international security. It is equally important to ensure that global processes, including multilateral export-control regimes, remain technically driven and insulated from politicization. Measures should be explored to make those regimes more inclusive, especially with regard to relevant information that could advance national controls on transferring and using strategic regimes. Further, politically driven unilateral measures must not unduly restrain international cooperation on peaceful uses.

The Philippines supports the Secretary-General's call to reimagine our efforts in weapons of mass

destruction disarmament in the context of development. There is space for taking further steps to unlock the synergies between the disarmament paradigm and the Sustainable Development Goals. International cooperation on peaceful uses would benefit from the strengthening of international organizations that are committed to maintaining the proper balance between peaceful uses and non-proliferation, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and the institutionalization of the BWC, including the operationalization of article X.

Mrs. Hanlummyuang (Thailand): Thailand aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

It has been almost a century since the world agreed to put a stop to chemical and biological weapons with the birth of the 1925 Geneva Protocol. Thailand is proud to have been involved in the negotiations thereon and subsequently became a State party in 1931. That important Protocol, among others, was the forerunner to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

However, we continue to face risks and threats associated with weapons of mass destruction that remain very real and that in some respects are indeed increasing. The extensive availability of sophisticated scientific and technological tools has also raised serious concerns about the impact of such weapons. Moreover, the astonishing loss of human life resulting from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) also reminds us of our vulnerability to and underpreparedness regarding such novel pathogens.

We must continue our consolidated efforts and do more. Biological and chemical weapons must not be used by anyone, at any time, under any circumstances. In that regard, Thailand wishes to reiterate the following three points.

First, upholding obligations under existing international instruments for disarmament and non-proliferation remains key to effective collective security responses.

Thailand opposes all use of chemical weapons and reiterates the importance of the effective and transparent implementation of the CWC as we commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the

CWC this year. We wish to commend the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in carrying out its missions, including the investigation, verification and destruction of chemical weapons, especially under the challenging circumstances caused by COVID-19.

Thailand reaffirms our commitment to the implementation of the BWC. To improve its effectiveness, we believe that it is time to strengthen the BWC by equipping it with more effective verification mechanisms to allow swift responses to the growing global biological threats. That will be a meaningful and practical step to manage emerging risks.

Secondly, it is imperative that the international community continue its efforts to reinforce the non-proliferation regime, including through strict adherence to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). We welcome the fruitful discussions held at the open consultations on the comprehensive review this year and hope that the inputs will feed into further strengthening the implementation of the resolution.

Thailand is honoured to have co-hosted, together with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and Japan, the Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) Workshop for ASEAN States this past September, which emphasized the role of capacity-building and strengthening regional coordination on the implementation of the resolution.

Moreover, ASEAN continues to strengthen border-management cooperation as it seeks to enhance regional connectivity. We encourage States parties to develop effective national export-control systems and to explore ways to strengthen border security, including by synchronizing existing practices.

Thirdly, while Thailand fully supports the peaceful and legitimate use of biochemical research and industry, we believe that States hold an important responsibility in placing control on dual-use items by developing guidelines and standards to promote biosecurity and chemical security.

In view of the growing connectivity and integration of the single market and production base within the ASEAN Community, we see the importance of promoting the free flow of goods, services and investments in a manner that is stable and secure. To help achieve that, our priority is to effectively control dual-use items and the transfer of technology while fostering engagements with the private sector.

On its part, Thailand will continue to review and strengthen our export-control system, perform on-site inspections and submit annual declarations. At the global level, we are committed to the implementation of all Security Council resolutions related to this issue.

In conclusion, Thailand wishes to reiterate our commitment to non-proliferation and the disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction. We will continue to exert the utmost efforts in implementing the measures necessary to comply with our obligations. It is within our shared responsibility to keep the world safe and secure from the devastating effect of such weapons.

Mr. Mabhongo (South Africa): South Africa aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction remains one of South Africa's key foreign policy priorities. We reiterate our commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and maintain the view that we have a collective responsibility to uphold the international norm against the production, use and stockpiling of chemical weapons established under the Convention. We also condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. It is imperative that States be held accountable for any non-compliance with their obligations under the CWC.

South Africa continues to support the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as the only technically competent international authority in the field of chemical weapons. My delegation calls on all States parties to redouble their efforts to cultivate a culture of consensus in the work of that important organization and restore an environment of cooperation and mutual agreement. That is essential to attaining the aspirations of the Convention and the OPCW.

South Africa underlines the importance of the full implementation of article XI of the CWC in order to strengthen and accelerate the economic and technological development of States parties, especially developing countries. In the implementation of article VII, South Africa encourages the OPCW Technical Secretariat to work closely with States parties and continue to provide appropriate, tailor-made assistance and technical support to them in enhancing their national capacities and in carrying out their national implementation measures.

South Africa underlines the importance of the Africa Programme remaining a core component of International Cooperation and Assistance programmes, and we note the progress made under the fifth phase of the OPCW Programme for Africa. We welcome the ongoing consultations concerning the conceptualization of the sixth phase of the Programme and look forward to its launch. That will build on the achievements made under the current phase. To guarantee its sustainability, we see the importance of future phases of the Programme being fully funded under the regular budget of the OPCW.

South Africa also underlines the importance of capacity-building and international cooperation for the benefit of States parties through the transfer of technology, knowledge, material and equipment for peaceful purposes.

As an important component of the international legal architecture related to weapons of mass destruction, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) represents an important contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security by preventing the threat posed by biological weapons. We remain committed to the strengthening of the BWC and its implementation to ensure that our common goal of preventing the threat posed by biological weapons is achieved.

South Africa welcomes the work already done in the build-up to the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, which represents an important opportunity to strengthen the Convention and its balanced implementation. Despite the practical challenges faced during the preparatory process, we believe that the work done since the eighth Review Conference provides a rich catalogue of ideas from which to craft a meaningful outcome.

South Africa also strongly believes, in line with article X of the Convention, that its implementation should not hamper the economic and technological development of the peaceful uses of biological agents but allow the beneficial elements of those agents to be developed to aid humankind.

We also take this opportunity to advise that South Africa recently recirculated its working paper on the implementation of article VII, on voluntary guidelines. Following extensive consultations, we believe that that proposal has reached a stage where it now enjoys wide support across all regional groups.

In conclusion, South Africa also attaches great importance to the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons. We consider the legal situation of the Mechanism to be clear and unambiguous and particularly value the fact that the Mechanism, established by the General Assembly, is directly available to each Member State when it is needed.

While our experts do not find the current technical guidelines and procedures to be wanting, we will not stand in the way of a process that would allow Member States to propose modifications, in a coordinated manner, for consideration by the Secretary-General.

Finally, my delegation would like to underscore that the universalization of the BWC and the CWC is crucial to the effective eradication of all biological and chemical weapons. We call upon those countries not yet party to those Conventions to join without further delay.

Mr. Bilgeri (Austria): We fully align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union and wish to add some remarks in our national capacity.

Austria's clear objective is a world free from all weapons of mass destruction (WMD). To achieve that goal, we need a renewed commitment by all States. We must collectively reaffirm the strong norms that exist against all WMD and strive to considerably strengthen existing institutions and mechanisms. The mere existence of weapons of mass destruction and the risk of their proliferation constitutes a serious danger to international peace and the common security of us all.

We therefore stand in full support of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), which have celebrated their twenty-fifth and fiftieth anniversaries, respectively, during this past year. We call on all States to join and fully implement the provisions of those treaties.

Austria unequivocally condemns any use of weapons of mass destruction or nuclear, biological or chemical weapons as well as all threats to use them. In that regard, we are also concerned about disinformation and inflammatory rhetoric and their potential for escalation.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a central component of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We strongly condemn the

appalling repeated use of chemical weapons in recent years, particularly the use of chemical weapons by Syria, in blatant violation of its obligations as a State party to the Convention. We urge Syria to fully comply with the Convention and to fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We are also deeply concerned about other uses of chemical weapons in the United Kingdom, in Russia and in Malaysia. All of them are unacceptable and contravene the standards and norms set out in the CWC while eroding the hard-earned taboo against chemical weapons.

We use this opportunity to reaffirm our condemnation in the strongest possible terms of any use of chemical weapons by anyone, at any time and under any circumstances. There cannot be impunity for the use of those abhorrent weapons, and we need to hold those responsible to account. Austria is a member of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons and fully supports the Partnership's efforts and mechanisms, which complement international mechanisms to combat the proliferation of chemical weapons.

We also wish to put on record our full trust in the professional, impartial and objective work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission, the Declaration Assessment Team and the Investigation and Identification Team.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) was the first Convention banning an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. The coronavirus disease pandemic highlighted the relevance of the BWC and the need to do our utmost to strengthen that unequivocal international norm against biological and toxin weapons. The importance of biosecurity and biosafety and international cooperation in those fields is currently more evident than ever, not only to experts but to the broader public. Norms such as the ones provided by the BWC are safeguards that protect us all.

We are currently witnessing rapid technological developments within the life sciences, accelerated in convergence with other new technologies such as artificial intelligence. At the same time, technological barriers are increasingly being lowered through information and communication technologies. As a result, the security challenges surrounding biological weapons are increasingly complex. We need to keep the BWC responsive to the challenges of our time. In facing

those developments, the Convention needs to expand its field of vision and strengthen its capabilities, a notion that is already enshrined in its article XII.

The upcoming Review Conference will be an important opportunity to achieve that goal and strengthen the BWC in general. However, making the upcoming Review Conference a success is not an end in itself but requires action by States.

Verification is a central element of multilateral disarmament regimes and efforts, including the BWC. That long-standing open question within the Convention needs increased attention, and we stand ready to engage on this issue. We also need to further promote national implementation and compliance as well as confidence-building. In addition, we look very favourably on the creation of a science and technology review process.

The article V consultations conducted in September made it very clear that we are missing certain elements for the proper functioning of the Convention. But we also need to underline that the Russian disinformation related to biological weapons and the unfounded claims in that regard are very worrisome and undermine the lawful and important cooperation between States as foreseen under article X of the Convention.

We also stand in full support of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons as the only existing international independent mechanism for the investigation of alleged uses of biological weapons.

Export-control regimes, notably the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Australia Group, make a significant contribution to the implementation of the legal commitments of multilateral disarmament instruments. We consider it highly important to ensure the effective functioning and implementation of those mechanisms.

In conclusion, we also need to emphasize the necessity of the full implementation and universalization of The Hague Code of Conduct, as the proliferation of ballistic missiles constitutes a continued threat and as the Code remains the only multilateral transparency and confidence-building instrument in that field.

Mr. Göbel (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of the European Union.

The Russian Federation started an unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February. We are outraged that the threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction has been evoked in the course of that conflict and that reckless military action by the Russian Federation is creating serious chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks for the population and the environment.

We are particularly concerned at the fact that unfounded accusations against Ukraine, a country with an exemplary non-proliferation track record, were used as a pretext to justify an illegal aggression against a sovereign country in the heart of Europe. Russia's behaviour is undermining the international arms-control and non-proliferation architecture, including the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), in the run-up to the important Review Conferences of both Conventions.

It is vital that States parties reach decisions at the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention that enhance compliance, increase transparency, promote confidence-building and strengthen the operational effectiveness of the BWC. Rapid developments in the life sciences and biotechnology offer new ways to fight diseases but also pose a potential risk for abuse and the development of biological weapons. We therefore consider it necessary to establish a scientific and technological experts advisory board within the framework of the BWC.

The German presidency of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction has put an emphasis on biological security this year. We condemn the disinformation campaign by the Russian Federation targeted at cooperation among members of the Global Partnership and States parties to the BWC in full compliance with article X of the Convention. Article V is an instrument too important for it be misused for political purposes. This summer we saw that the allegations that Russia made under article V of the BWC were not tenable and were unfounded.

We highlight the importance of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons and underscore the need to properly resource, equip and operationalize it. In September we conducted a capstone simulation exercise in Berlin to demonstrate and improve the operational readiness of the Mechanism.

This year the Chemical Weapons Convention celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. The CWC is the world's most successful disarmament convention and, with 193 States parties, has almost reached universality. Together with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), its implementing organization, it is key to preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. But in recent years the universally accepted global ban on the use of chemical weapons has come under increasing pressure.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria was a flagrant violation of international law. We are concerned at Syria's continued stance of non-compliance, and we strongly call on it to fully comply with its obligations under the CWC by resolving all pending issues with regard to its initial declaration and by fully cooperating with the OPCW.

We remain equally concerned by the repeated use of internationally banned nerve agents, as in the cases of Mr. Skripal and Mr. Navalny. The Russian Federation, on whose territory the attack on Mr. Navalny took place more than two years ago, has not provided any explanations on the attack, nor have we learned of any criminal investigation of that case. We continue to call on Russia to launch such a substantial investigation, to answer all outstanding questions in full transparency and without further delay, and to fully cooperate with the OPCW.

The OPCW, its Director-General and Technical Secretariat have proved their technical and professional expertise and their high degree of impartiality and independence. We applaud the sustained efforts made by the OPCW to investigate the use of chemical weapons and to fight impunity, and we reaffirm our continuous support for that body.

The success of the CWC over the past quarter century is the result of the commitment of its States parties; all stakeholders will need to play their part in order to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. The upcoming fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the CWC will be key for the CWC to remain the world's most successful multilateral disarmament regime.

Mr. Sivamohan (Malaysia): Malaysia 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 the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, respectively.

Consistent with our position on general and complete disarmament, Malaysia continues to advocate for the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), be they nuclear, chemical or biological. The dangers of WMDs cannot be overstated, and their very existence is a blight on the conscience of humankind.

The horrors inflicted by chemical weapons during the First World War and their subsequent development and stockpiling during the cold-war era tragically remind us of the excesses that nations are capable of committing when unconstrained by international law and the basic dictates of humanity.

Having now been in force for a quarter century, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) retains its relevance as a landmark instrument proscribing an entire class of WMDs. While it is significant that more than 99 per cent of declared chemical-weapons stockpiles have been destroyed under the verification of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), nothing less than total elimination will suffice if we are to ensure peace, security and sustainable development for all.

Malaysia condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by any party, under any circumstances. We are gravely concerned by the re-emergence of chemical-weapons attacks, in blatant contravention of international law and the CWC in particular. It is imperative that those who resort to the use of those abhorrent weapons be held to account. The world cannot afford the risk of any erosion of the integrity and credibility of the CWC and the established international norm against the use of chemical weapons that the Convention codifies.

We recognize the OPCW as the sole organization mandated to undertake investigations on chemical-weapons use. In that regard, Malaysia urges all parties concerned to cooperate with the OPCW to ensure a thorough and impartial investigation of all incidents.

Malaysia reiterates its call on developed countries to promote international cooperation through the transfer of technology, material and equipment for peaceful purposes in the chemical field. All discriminatory restrictions that are contrary to the spirit of the CWC should be removed.

Malaysia fully supports efforts to ensure the universalization of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). We believe that effective verification measures should be put in place to strengthen the implementation of the BWC as a key component of the global disarmament architecture.

My delegation remains ready to facilitate and participate in the exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the use of biological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes, as provided for under article X of the Convention.

Malaysia also looks forward to the convening of the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, to be held in Geneva later this year.

In times of increased geopolitical tension and instability in the international security arena, let us strengthen our resolve to realize a world free of all WMDs. We must spare no effort to safeguard all nations and peoples from the unacceptable risks and humanitarian consequences that such weapons inherently carry.

The Chair: I shall now call on those delegations that have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I would remind all delegations of the time limitations that have been prescribed.

Mr. Turner (United States of America): I take the floor to respond to Russia's continued efforts to malign completely permissible international cooperation and assistance activities in order to justify its unprovoked, illegal and brutal invasion of Ukraine.

In the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) article V consultations held on 9 September, the United States delegation effectively exposed Russia's disinformation tactics and dispelled Russia's attempts to malign peaceful United States cooperation with Ukraine. In the presence of delegations from 89 countries, the United States and Ukraine presented a thorough, in-depth series of presentations that strongly refuted Russia's false claims of United States biological weapons development and biolabs in Ukraine. Technical experts from the United States and Ukrainian delegations unambiguously explained their cooperation and United States assistance related to public health facilities, biosafety, biosecurity and disease surveillance as part of the broader United States Cooperative Threat Reduction programme.

The United States and Ukraine also highlighted how such activities are consistent with and further support the provisions of the BWC, particularly article X, which promotes cooperation and assistance by States parties. States parties affirmed and supported the United States in that regard, with more than 35 of the 42 countries that spoke noting the importance of such work.

The United States will continue to fulfil its obligations under the BWC, including by assisting partners around the world to strengthen global health security and reduce the impacts of infectious diseases on our societies. Those partnerships are devoted exclusively to peaceful purposes; they have nothing to do with weapons. Such cooperation should not be undermined but, rather, promoted and reinforced.

Just turning briefly to the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of the Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological or Toxin Weapons, the United States, like others that spoke today, places great value on preserving the integrity and independence of the Secretary-General's Mechanism, which allows the Secretary-General to investigate the alleged use of chemical or biological weapons if requested by any Member State.

While the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has largely taken over that role in the context of possible chemical-weapons use, the Secretary-General's Mechanism is still the pre-eminent international mechanism for investigating the alleged use of biological weapons.

The use of chemical weapons in recent years in Iraq, Malaysia, Russia, Syria and the United Kingdom, combined with the experience of the coronavirus disease pandemic and the risk that revolutionary advances in the life sciences might be misused for biological weapons, underscores the need for effective international mechanisms for investigating the possible use of chemical, biological or toxin weapons.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Many Western countries are continuing to engage in negative practices characterized by the unfounded politicization of the agenda and activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) against Russia and the hushing up of facts that are inconvenient for these countries involving violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), thus distorting the actual situation at that specialized international agency and, as a consequence, intentionally misleading Member States.

The Russian Federation categorically rejects the continuing insinuations about the supposed involvement of Russia in the use of nerve agents known as Novichok in the West. The two hastily thrown-together stories — those of Navalny and Skripal — are links in a chain within an unbridled propaganda campaign whose goal is to put continued economic and political pressure on our country. London continues to refuse to engage in a substantive discussion or undertake a joint investigation of what took place in Salisbury, as a result of which Russian citizens suffered.

The most recent note on this topic was sent just last month, and, like all previous ones, was simply ignored. Now the story about the supposed poisoning of Navalny is unfolding in the very same way being fuelled by the United States and its allies. It is Russia that has adopted a maximally transparent position on that story. And in response to our efforts to establish contacts in order to investigate what really happened, NATO member States have essentially, from the very first day, resorted to “megaphone diplomacy”. For over two years, London, Berlin, Paris and Stockholm have failed to provide any substantive responses to our questions.

It should be absolutely clear to any impartial observer that, just as in the case of Syria, those self-proclaimed warriors against impunity are not at all interested in the truth. Instead of promoting a civilized dialogue, the States parties to the CWC, being aggressively pushed to join in the hysteria related to the alleged breach of the Convention. In the light of those facts, those who are so persistently hiding the truth from Russia and criticizing us are engaging in the theatre of the absurd and acting with cynicism.

It is also important to remind my Western colleagues that Russia proposed including on the CWC control lists all chemical substances that are termed Novichok in Western laboratories based on their research findings. However, it is precisely due to the position of Western countries that it was impossible to do that. In that connection, the legitimate question could be asked: what is this new Novichok that NATO member States are so misguidedly intent on keeping secret, preferring not to subject it to verification or include it on the lists of CWC controlled substances?

For us, the answer is clear, and we suggest that Western States get to the bottom of why the States members of NATO and the European Union are secretly developing new forms of toxic chemicals.

The position of Russia on those two incidents has not changed. We are decisively interested in establishing the truth about both incidents. Once again, we confirm our readiness to engage in substantive cooperation between our law-enforcement bodies and our experts. We will continue to demand from the authorities of the United Kingdom and Germany comprehensive official information as well the fulfilment of their international legal obligations.

In conclusion, I would like to draw the attention of colleagues to the fact that statements in support of the Convention must be backed up by deeds and not based on selective approaches. In contravention of article XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention, 30,000 tons of Russian fertilizer are being illegally held in NATO ports. We have repeatedly suggested that that fertilizer be transferred to developing countries free of charge, but Brussels has consistently blocked such a move. Obviously they have some kind of narrow interests in that respect. That disgusting situation clearly demonstrates that NATO countries, other than engaging in demagogic stunts, are not interested in suggesting anything related to preserving the integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked for the floor to respond to the accusations made by some delegations against my country.

At the outset, I unequivocally reject the accusations made against my country. They are baseless accusations and part of the politicized work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its use as a platform for realizing the narrow interests of some countries that make them.

Syria condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances, anywhere and at any time. The statements made by the countries levelling accusations at Syria have ignored the continued ongoing cooperation between Syria and the OPCW. Since its accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Syria has been keen on full cooperation with the OPCW. It eliminated its entire chemical stockpile in record time despite its extremely difficult circumstances. That was confirmed by the Head of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Mission before the Security Council in June 2014. Syria's latest report on its cooperation with the OPCW was sent on 15 September.

Syria continues to communicate with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in a constructive and positive manner. Syria has confirmed that it does not acknowledge the legitimacy of the Investigation and Identification Team. We believe that the formation of that Team is part of an aggressive plan against Syria. That is why its Western creators are intent on completely ignoring Syria's cooperation with the OPCW and deliberately and falsely accuse Syria of non-compliance with the Convention. For that reason, that is a fully politicized decision that does not serve the Convention's objectives and constitutes a bad example of how the Organization deals with its State parties even as it succumbs to the influence of some Western countries that use it to serve their foreign policies.

I would remind those countries that are making accusations against Syria that my country is committed to non-proliferation and the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction. Its commitment is a firm one. In 1968, Syria acceded to the Geneva Protocol of 1925 on the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases. In 1969, it acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and in 1972, it acceded to the Biological Weapons Convention. In 2013, it acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Syria and many other countries have made comments related to the work of Fact-Finding Missions that do not uphold the provisions of the Convention. We mentioned in detail the flaws in the work of those missions in the relevant forum.

Some countries continue to cast doubts on Syria's declaration. We reject their doubts because they are not true. Syria has spared no effort to work with the Technical Secretariat in order to fully implement its declaration and has followed a positive and constructive approach in dealing with the issues raised by the Technical Secretariat.

In conclusion, I would like to express my delegation's rejection and denunciation of the inappropriate language and systematic behaviour adopted by the representatives of the United States as they clearly exploit the issue of chemical weapons in order to distort the image of the Syrian Government. The United States has no right to make accusations against Syria because it is involved in direct military aggression against us. It provides coverage for the armed terrorist groups. It is involved in the killing of thousands of Syrians and the demolition of their property.

The United States representative has no right to give lessons on international law, the purposes and principles of the Charter and human rights violations. His delegation's Government is involved in hostile activities and flagrantly violates the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law. It is involved in shelling civilians and destroying the Syrian city of Raqqa. It has prevented the Syrian people from meeting their most basic needs by imposing illegitimate coercive measures against them. The United States openly steals 200,000 barrels of Syrian oil every day, as well as stealing 400,000 tons of cotton while setting fire to thousands of hectares of agricultural land. It boasts that it has devalued the Syrian lira and has also imposed illegitimate coercive measures against Syria, denying the Syrian people food and medicine.

Through the illegitimate coalition that it leads in Syria, the United States has directly committed thousands of crimes. It has murdered hundreds of thousands of people and destroyed hospitals, dams and care centres. It protects and shields Israel's arsenal of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. The United States makes up fake excuses to keep its chemical arsenal and has been procrastinating in getting rid of it despite the fact that the deadlines for doing so have long passed.

The United States has no right to accuse the Syrian Arab Republic of using chemical weapons. Its track record is replete with proven, not fabricated, facts relating to the use of nuclear and chemical weapons against civilians across the world. The outcome of its actions can still be seen today.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.