



# General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

## First Committee

**15<sup>th</sup>** meeting

Wednesday, 19 October 2022, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*Chair:* Mr. Pieris .....(Sri Lanka)

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

### Agenda items 90 to 108 (continued)

#### **Thematic discussion on specific subjects and introduction and consideration of draft resolutions and decisions submitted on all disarmament and international security agenda items**

**The Chair:** I would like to remind all delegations that the time limit for statements during the thematic segment is five minutes when speaking in their national capacity and seven minutes when speaking on behalf of several delegations. I would also like to inform delegations that 29 speakers remain on the list of speakers, according to our programme of work, which is to complete consideration of this cluster today. I therefore implore delegations to cooperate fully and to use even less of the allotted time to ensure that we exhaust the list of speakers and remain on schedule.

**Mr. Soon Yee Liang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): In the current circumstances, strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is increasingly important to maintaining international peace and security and promoting economic and social development. Parties should practice true multilateralism and actively engage in dialogue and cooperation to uphold the purposes and objectives of the two Conventions and safeguard their authority and effectiveness. President Xi Jinping of China proposed the Global Security Initiative in April, stressing the need for the international community to jointly respond to global challenges, including biosecurity challenges. China is willing to

work with parties to further strengthen the authority and effectiveness of the BWC and push for substantive results at the ninth BWC Review Conference. China wishes to share the following propositions.

First, negotiations on the verification protocol should be relaunched. The establishment of a verification mechanism is the best way to ensure the authority and effectiveness of treaties in arms control and disarmament. Biosecurity should not be an exception. China once again calls upon the Review Conference to take the decision to create an ad hoc group to relaunch negotiations on a legally binding verification protocol based on the draft nearly agreed upon in 2001.

Secondly, legitimate compliance concerns should be addressed. Not long ago, States parties to the BWC held a formal consultative meeting in Geneva to deliberate on the compliance of the United States of America with the BWC. Russia raised a series of specific issues, but the United States has yet to provide exhaustive responses to them. As a State party and depositary of the Convention, the United States has the obligation to make comprehensive and in-depth clarifications on the allegations made by Russia, as well as questions raised by China and other States parties, and to set an example of compliance to win the international community's confidence in its BWC compliance. China supports continued technical assessments by parties through expert groups and the submission of assessment opinions. States parties could consider continuing to utilize the BWC mechanism, including relevant arrangements under article VI of the BWC to work for a solution to relevant issues.

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Thirdly, the review of science and technology development should be strengthened. Responsible bioscientific research is critical to lowering biosecurity risks and promoting the contribution of bioscience to humankind. We encourage all stakeholders to adopt the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists and to push for the endorsement of the guidelines by the Review Conference.

Fourthly, international cooperation should be actively promoted. We call on parties to ensure the right of developing countries to peaceful uses in biotechnology and other fields within the framework of the Convention, to comprehensively meet the goals and the purposes of the BWC and to constantly advance peaceful uses of biotechnology and equitable benefits sharing. The Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons was established against a unique historical background. Some countries have voiced concerns or alarm. We support further study and discussion of its guidelines in the light of the changing situation.

As the only country in the world with chemical weapons stockpiles, the United States should earnestly fulfil its obligations and expedite the destruction of its stockpiles. Recently, China and Japan invited the Director General and the delegation of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to visit China virtually and to advise on ways to speed up the destruction of abandoned Japanese chemical weapons. China urges Japan to honour its commitment and increase inputs so as to return as soon as possible a land free of abandoned chemical weapons to the Chinese people. The practice of disregarding communication and consultation among State parties and arbitrary resort to the vote severely undermines the authority and effectiveness of the CWC and negatively impacts the normal operation of the OPCW. We call on the relevant countries to refrain from political manipulation, work with all to improve the working atmosphere within the OPCW and restore its work to the right track.

China is always firmly opposed to the use of chemical weapons by any country or individual under any circumstances. Cases of the alleged use of chemical weapons should be handled in strict accordance with the provisions of the CWC and in an impartial, objective and professional manner to establish facts through dialogue and cooperation. Dialogue and cooperation are the only way to resolve the Syrian chemical weapons issue. We hope that the Syrian Government and the Technical

Secretariat of the OPCW will cooperate constructively within the framework of the CWC with a view to making progress on pending issues.

**Mr. Hashmi** (Pakistan): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.11).

Within the broader international arms control architecture, the Conventions outlawing biological and chemical weapons represent significant milestones in normative, institutional and operational terms. Even as the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) regimes have largely advanced their goals, both continue to face opportunities and challenges due to rapid advances in the fields of biology and chemistry, as well as their intersection with emerging technologies.

We share the concerns over the possibility of the acquisition, production and use of chemical and biological materials, as well as technology, by non-State actors and in some cases by States as well. We agree that sensitive technologies and materials should be adequately regulated to guard against uses that are incompatible with the purposes of the BWC or CWC. However, that objective cannot justify control measures that impede legitimate uses of biological or chemical sciences, equipment and technology among States parties for demonstrably peaceful purposes. It is vital to restore balance and even-handedness in the implementation of the export control regimes.

The non-discriminatory implementation of the BWC and CWC, national physical protection measures and international assistance and cooperation are key tools to prevent non-State actors from acquiring, producing or using those weapons. We support the proposal for negotiating an international convention to combat acts of chemical and biological terrorism in the Conference on Disarmament.

The BWC regime remains distinct even five decades after its inception. It has registered progress in strengthening the normative framework. Its organizational and institutional arrangements have evolved. Yet, its full potential needs to be leveraged by advancing its promotional and institutional arrangements. The next Review Conference and the forthcoming fiftieth anniversary of the Convention present worthwhile stock-taking and transformational opportunities to chart a vibrant road map for the next 50 years of the BWC regime.

The coronavirus disease pandemic laid bare the fragilities of the global public health architecture, including the intersecting issues of life sciences, viruses and infectious diseases. There are important lessons for the BWC regime to learn from the pandemic concerning the mutually reinforcing nature of its prevention and protection aspects, as well as the urgency of amplifying international assistance and cooperation in the field of life sciences. Pakistan remains committed to the full, effective and balanced implementation of the BWC. We have contributed to the Convention, including by presiding over its Review Conference. We will continue to engage with the BWC community constructively.

We consider the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons to be an important operational tool for investigating complaints of alleged use. We view confidence-building measures as a tool for increasing transparency and building trust and confidence among States parties. However, neither the Secretary-General's Mechanism nor confidence-building measures can substitute for assessing compliance by States parties or the widely supported proposal for concluding a legally binding verification protocol under the BWC. We wish to note that the Secretary-General's Mechanism remains an operational tool for investigating an act after its occurrence. However, concluding a verification protocol would ensure that biological and toxin weapons are never developed, produced, stockpiled or otherwise acquired or retained, thereby precluding their use by States parties.

Pakistan remains committed to advancing the goals of the CWC. We continue to actively participate in the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We firmly believe in preserving the effectiveness, objectivity and credibility of the OPCW and its verification regime. The OPCW should be strengthened to deal with ongoing and future challenges within the confines of the CWC, while according priority to the complete destruction of declared as well as abandoned chemical weapons. Pakistan condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. Those responsible for such acts must be held accountable. The role of the OPCW in dealing with cases of chemical weapons use should remain fully compliant with the provisions of the CWC. Extending the Secretariat's remit towards attribution is inconsistent with the technical nature of its work.

Access to and the use of biology and chemistry remain critical to the economies and societies of developing countries. The potential dual nature of the emerging technologies in those areas should not be used as a pretext for proscribing or restricting their availability to developing countries. Striking a balance between addressing new risks and keeping avenues of assistance and cooperation open is essential.

**Mr. Vorontsov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We strictly adhere to our obligations under the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). The BTWC should remain a reliable tool for reducing the threat of use of biological agents as weapons and contribute to developing international biological cooperation for peaceful purposes. The utmost effectiveness of the Convention can be achieved only if all States parties fully implement all of its provisions. That in turn can be achieved only by adopting a legally binding protocol to the Convention, establishing a credible and efficient verification mechanism.

In order to address the outstanding issues surrounding the implementation of BTWC provisions by the United States of America and Ukraine within the context of military and biological activities on Ukrainian territory, Russia, in accordance with article V of the Convention, as well as in keeping with the outcome documents of the second and third Review Conferences, initiated a consultative meeting of States parties. However, despite all of our efforts, we have not received exhaustive answers to the detailed, specific claims we submitted regarding the compliance of those States with articles I and IV of the Convention. Those issues remain open and must be solved.

This state of affairs is outrageous and, in order to resolve it, it is imperative that we continue meaningful consideration of those issues within the BTWC, specifically to discuss the outcomes of the consultative meeting and follow-up activities at the ninth Review Conference of the Convention. It is equally important not to limit our work to consultations and exchange of view, but to harness the entire toolbox existing under the Convention, including article VI of the BTWC, in order to investigate the breaches of Convention provisions by the United States and Ukraine. The outcomes of the meeting demonstrated yet again the vital need to strengthen the Convention's institutions. A wide spectrum of Russian initiatives are aimed at solving that task. We propose taking appropriate decisions at the ninth BTWC Review Conference.

Russia would like to confirm its interest in strengthening the expertise and the technical capacity of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. The Russian Federation intends to continue contributing to the global community's overall efforts on that front. In order to effectively use the Mechanism, the Russian Federation is submitting a draft resolution to the First Committee for its consideration (A/C.1/77/L.69). We ask for the Committee's support and co-sponsorship of the draft resolution.

The Russian Federation is fulfilling its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in good faith. In 2017, three years ahead of the deadline set by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), we destroyed one of the world's largest chemical weapons arsenals. We urge the United States to follow the example we have set. The United States has all the necessary financial and technological capacity to eliminate as soon as possible remaining stockpiles of toxic substances.

As for the OPCW, the situation there continues to deteriorate. The Euro-Atlantic allies, led by the United States, are deliberately pursuing a destructive policy of further politicizing the activities of that multilateral platform, which is technical in its purpose. The Russian Federation, alongside Syria, is already being attacked with the unfounded accusations of violating the CWC. Insinuations about the Skripal case and the alleged poisoning of Alexey Navalny are already being compounded by accusations that the allied forces of the Russian Federation, the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic — who are in the Donbas as part of the special military operation — are allegedly preparing to use toxic and chemical weapons there. Such accusations are being made despite the fact that we have been warning since December 2021 about possible provocations being planned for chemical facilities in the south and south-east of Ukraine by Ukrainian formations, including with the direct involvement of foreign special services and private military companies.

The Russian Federation has unswervingly opposed the unbridled politicization of OPCW activities by Western countries. We intend to continue working hand in hand with our partners and like-minded countries, making every possible effort to restore the spirit of consensus within the OPCW, as well as to restore the authority of that international body.

**Mr. Prince (Bangladesh):** Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.11). Allow me to share our national position.

The world today is confronting diverse and unprecedented security challenges. Those challenges, in particular the conflict in Ukraine, have shaken the foundation of international peace and security. Our common hope for peace and stability is in jeopardy. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction presents an incalculable consequence for regional and global security and requires transnational cooperation for solution. We join others in voicing the need for further strengthening multilateral efforts to prevent the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction that contain chemical, biological and radioactive materials. We express our deep concern at the growing possibility of terrorists and other unauthorized non-State actors using or gaining access to such weapons of mass destruction in certain situations.

Bangladesh remains committed to the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We strongly condemn any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances. Immediately after the ratification of the CWC in 1997, Bangladesh submitted the necessary declaration regarding the chemical weapons and their production facilities. We enacted the Chemical Weapons (Prohibition) Act in 2006, formulated the Enrollment Rules in 2010 and, following that, established the Bangladesh National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention to implement and fulfil our obligations under the Convention.

Despite making significant progress in preventing the proliferation of chemical weapons, we have seen repeated use of chemical weapons in recent years. The international community must be united in condemning such uses and those responsible must be held accountable in a transparent manner. In that regard, we stress the paramount importance of upholding the credibility and integrity of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and of allowing the OPCW to deliver on its mandates and responsibilities with due diligence and impartiality. Bangladesh maintains robust cooperation with the OPCW to promote the peaceful use of chemicals. Bangladesh was the first State members of the OPCW to introduce Chemical Incident Preparedness



for Hospitals, in July 2019. We also partnered with the OPCW to build the capacity of our national experts in managing chemical supply-chain security. We call upon Member States to recommit to never using chemical weapons by destroying remaining stocks. We reiterate our call for the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Bangladesh considers the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) to be an important legal instrument related to weapons of mass destruction. While unprecedented advances in biological science and technology have brought immense opportunities, concerns for their potential uses contrary to the provisions of the Convention remain. We reaffirm our commitment to fulfilling the provisions of the BWC. The international community must work together to ensure that the BWC can effectively address present and future challenges.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has revealed our shared vulnerability to the potentially catastrophic consequences of pathogens and other biological threats. In that regard, we underscore the importance of the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of article X of the Convention by enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in toxins, biological agents, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes. We reiterate the need for further strengthening of the BWC Implementation Support Unit to effectively respond to various capacity-building needs of State parties, especially the least developed countries. We also call for the establishment of an international body with a mandate to investigate suspected outbreaks of biological agents. The upcoming ninth Review Conference will be an opportunity to ensure that the BWC is able to address the biological threats that may lie ahead.

In conclusion, Bangladesh recalls the need to prevent the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction, and therefore, underscores the necessity of international cooperation and action in this regard.

**Mr. Damico (Brazil):** The very notion of weapons of mass destruction shocks the conscience of humankind. Their mere existence challenges international humanitarian law and the dictates of public conscience. Their use or threat of use anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances, cannot and shall not be tolerated.

Fifty years after the opening for signatures of the Biological Weapons Convention, we are yet to agree on a multilateral mechanism to verify compliance with its provisions. Brazil favours the prompt resumption of

negotiations with a view to the adoption of a binding verification protocol. Such a protocol will strengthen the implementation of the Convention and foster trust among States parties regarding the exclusively peaceful use of knowledge and technology in the field of life sciences. The upcoming BWC Review Conference represents a unique opportunity to resume such discussions without delay.

While biological weapons are still poorly regulated, chemical weapons are under strict international scrutiny. The Chemical Weapons Convention represents the golden standard in terms of multilateral regimes on weapons of mass destruction. Besides defining the prohibition of chemical weapons through a comprehensive, legally binding and non-discriminatory set of norms, the Convention is equipped with a full-fledged and effective verification mechanism. It is unfortunate that despite that sophisticated institutional apparatus and very much to our revulsion, instances of use of those weapons in different regions of the world still take place.

As we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention's entry into force and of the creation of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), allow me to reaffirm Brazil's unyielding support for the work of the Organization and to renew our expectation that we will, hopefully and sooner rather than later, be able to overcome the regrettable politicization that has undermined the culture of consensus within the OPCW and its decision-making bodies.

The possibility that weapons of mass destruction could fall into the hands of non-State actors, particularly terrorists, concerns all. Fortunately, we have Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which is a valuable tool in addressing this very grave matter. Brazil shares the serious preoccupations and is actively engaged in the discussions in the Security Council regarding the future of the 1540 regime and its comprehensive review process. In line with Security Council resolution 2325 (2016), adopted in the wake of the first review process, we understand that emerging risks of the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, their delivery systems and related materials, as well as rapid advances in science, technology and international commerce for proliferation purposes, must be part of the current review. That notwithstanding, we reiterate our belief that any changes to the resolution's mandate should not lead us to unduly impose obstacles to the access to sensitive and dual-use goods and technologies for peaceful purposes.

**Mr. Louafi** (Algeria): The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) continue to serve as key milestones of the international security and cooperation architecture, not only through their role against the use of such weapons but also as a framework for international cooperation for socioeconomic development. As a State party to those Conventions, Algeria remains committed to the full implementation of the provisions of those international instruments. We seize this opportunity to call on all countries that have not yet acceded to those two Conventions to do so without delay.

The BTWC represents a key instrument for multilateral cooperation in the sphere of security in obliging us to overcome the multiple challenges posed by biological weapons. It also constitutes a significant framework for international cooperation to facilitate the social and economic development of developing countries. Full respect for and the balanced implementation of all provisions of the Convention are vital to allowing the objectives of the Convention to be achieved.

Algeria continues to believe that the adoption of a legally binding verification instrument would be the best way to ensure the respect by States of their legal obligations under the Convention. We look forward to the forthcoming Review Conference of the BTWC, which will constitute a real opportunity to advance the objectives of that instrument. In this context, Algeria underlines the need for the full implementation of article X of the Convention to facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, material and scientific and technological development in the biological sphere to the benefit of developing countries for peaceful purposes, especially in the public health, social and economic sectors and biological security and safety aspects, and to assist those countries to react swiftly to biological threats.

Algeria reaffirms its condemnation of any use of chemical weapons by anyone, for whatever reason and under any circumstances. The CWC regime has made enormous progress in eliminating chemical weapons all over the world. At the same time and within an ever-changing world, it has faced exacerbating challenges deepened by the emergence of new threats at the global, regional and national levels. We welcome the major accomplishments in the implementation of the Convention, in particular with respect to the

destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles. This is a sign that Member States have a robust trust in the Convention's regime.

Algeria considers that the significant progress in the area of chemical disarmament is the result of the spirit of dialogue and cooperation that has characterized its work. It is crucial to preserve this spirit so that the objectives of the Convention can be achieved in the same way as responsible and consensus-based cooperation. Nevertheless, the evolving trend of divergence among States parties to the Convention, as well as the recurrent use of voting in the adoption of decisions, are a source of concern. Algeria considers that collective action under the CWC framework should facilitate joint international efforts aimed at promoting technological cooperation and scientific exchange in order to guarantee all States parties the reflection in concrete action of their enshrined right to use chemistry for peaceful purposes.

Algeria emphasizes the importance of comprehensive review of the status of implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) as an integral part of the disarmament architecture in all its aspects. In that respect, the recent comprehensive review of its status has been an opportunity to improve implementation of the resolution. It is crucial to articulate an appropriate balance between the need for peaceful use of technologies and materials aiming to promote development and socioeconomic progress and the concern to protect ourselves from their misuse by non-State actors.

**Mr. Liddle** (United Kingdom): Upholding the complete ban on the development, production, stockpiling or use of chemical and biological weapons remains crucial for international peace and security. The 1925 Geneva Protocol, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) are essential elements of the international rules-based system. The United Kingdom calls on all States to adhere to those treaties and welcomes Namibia's accession to the BTWC this year.

On the other hand, Russia's spreading of false narratives and disinformation concerning chemical and biological weapons in Ukraine, including by misusing the BTWC article V process, risks undermining that aim. The formal consultative meeting convened under article V demonstrated that there is no merit in Russia's

allegations, and the United Kingdom considers the matter closed. We condemn as irresponsible threats of use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons, or related materials, by Russia and reiterate that any use of such weapons would be met with severe consequences.

The United Kingdom urges States parties to seize the opportunity presented by the ninth BTWC Review Conference. Now more than ever, we must strengthen the Convention. The coronavirus disease pandemic demonstrated the importance of bolstering the global biosecurity regime. Rapid advances in science and technology pose both risks and opportunities. The United Kingdom stands ready to work with all States parties to consider proposals, including in the areas of assistance and cooperation, scientific and technological developments and institutional frameworks. To keep the Convention fit for future challenges, we also support the proposal for an experts working group to identify steps to strengthen implementation of the Convention in all aspects.

The United Kingdom continues to strongly support the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. The Mechanism complements those weapons of mass destruction treaties as the sole international, effective and independent mechanism for investigating the alleged use of biological weapons and of chemical weapons for those States that are not party to the CWC, in close coordination with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). As in previous years, the United Kingdom will not support proposals that would undermine the Secretary-General's mandate or the independence of the Mechanism.

We must continue to uphold the total ban on their use, the danger of which we have seen in recent years in Russia, Syria, the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Iraq. We reiterate that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable. Russia should answer the basic questions the United Kingdom and other States have asked about the confirmed use of Novichok nerve agents against Alexei Navalny in 2020 and in Salisbury in 2018. Russia must declare all chemical weapons in accordance with the CWC.

Since 2018, with the backing of the United Kingdom, the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team has worked to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria. The Team has published two reports,

attributing responsibility to the Al-Assad regime for four attacks, following the finding by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism that the Al-Assad regime was responsible for four other attacks and Daesh for two attacks. Syria has not taken any of those steps and has obstructed the OPCW in its work. We urge Syria to take the required measures to comply with the Convention specified by the OPCW Executive Council without delay and to abide by the terms of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), which require full cooperation with the OPCW and the United Nations.

The United Kingdom strongly supports the independent, impartial and expert work of the OPCW. We look forward to the opening of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology and welcome continued work on capacity-building among States parties, with ongoing United Kingdom financial and technical support. The OPCW should be allowed to conduct its work free from disinformation or assaults on its integrity. We also proudly support the work of the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. Our work includes a focus on support for the OPCW, furthering the Signature Initiative to Mitigate Biological Threats in Africa, and strengthening capabilities in export controls.

Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) plays a crucial role in preventing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery, and related materials, from falling into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorists. The Security Council should reaffirm its principles. We support efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the resolution, including clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the 1540 Committee and its Chair and giving the Group of Experts the authority it needs to support the Committee's work. We encourage States to use the comprehensive review to assess and strengthen their own implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) measures. Let us redouble our efforts to uphold the ban on the use and spread of those horrific weapons.

**Mr. Gunaratna (Sri Lanka):** My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.11). I wish to make the followings points in my national capacity.

At a time when the world is grappling with several global crises and witnessing the alarming deterioration of the international security environment, the need

to curb all weapons of mass destruction assumes paramount importance. The precarious nature of the international security environment today is such that a misperception or mistake can endanger our very existence. Sri Lanka became a State party to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in 1972 and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1993. We attach great importance to these two instruments in our collective quest to delegitimize all weapons of mass destruction — chemical, biological and nuclear.

We note with satisfaction the effective operation of the CWC as the only comprehensive multilateral treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, along with a verification system, as well as promoting the use of chemicals for peaceful purposes. It must be reiterated that any use of chemical weapons is a complete disregard of humanity, reprehensible and devoid of any legal or moral basis. Sri Lanka has accordingly implemented a system to give effect to the Convention nationally. Among other measures, the scheduled chemical industries are identified and registered under our National Authority, which comes under the Ministry of Defence, and import recommendations and permits are issued to the scheduled chemical users. We are currently in the process of increasing efficiencies associated with that process through development of an online software and the establishment of a dedicated analytical laboratory for the National Authority.

We underline the need to achieve full universality of the CWC and to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons and access to them by non-State actors. Any allegation regarding the use of chemical weapons must be dealt with strictly as per the provisions and procedures laid down in the Convention, and consent must be addressed through consultation and cooperation among all parties concerned.

The Biological Weapons Convention is a vital component in the legal architecture to combat weapons of mass destruction. However, the lack of a verification system continues to pose challenges to its effective implementation. Sri Lanka shares the position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the need to strengthen the full implementation of the Convention, including through the negotiation and conclusion of a legally binding protocol setting out modalities to ensure the implementation of all articles of the Convention in a balanced and comprehensive manner. The need to enhance international cooperation for peaceful purposes should be underlined.

In a nutshell, what is sought is a harmonized international legal regime that ensures biosafety and biosecurity. The terms “biosafety” and “biosecurity” have today come to encompass not only laboratory biosecurity, but biosecurity that addresses deliberate threats from terrorism, as well as naturally occurring biological threats. The thinking appears to be that biosecurity is not limited to protecting laboratory-based pathogens and toxins from theft, as dangerous pathogens are not located only in laboratories but can also be found readily in nature. Bioterrorism and the spread of high containment biological laboratories around the world with pathogenic agents of concern are located primarily within the laboratories, and the improvement of security in the laboratories must be of paramount importance. We have witnessed and experienced the catastrophe of a pandemic and we cannot afford to have another. It is therefore necessary to develop more globally coherent biosafety and biosecurity standards, overcome the yawning gaps in the regulatory framework and curtail the risk of accidental release of dangerous pathogens, as well as to prevent the possibility of the international misuse of biotechnology. We believe that confidence-building measures among States will facilitate greater exchange of information within the research community, while also creating trust among the different stakeholders for a verifiable common standard against biological weapons.

Finally, with regard to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), we take note of the open consultations of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) on the comprehensive review of the status of the resolution, held in May to June. While we note the expiry of the Committee’s mandate in November, we underscore that any review should be in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant legally binding instruments and should not be diverted from the main focus of preventing the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors.

The Government of Sri Lanka has steadfastly and consistently supported global initiatives to prevent the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction. As a country that experienced and suffered from three decades of ruthless terrorism, and as a nation that has successfully eliminated terrorism from its soil, Sri Lanka fully understands the danger of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors. Sri Lanka continues to take measures, with



the participation of all stakeholders concerned, to implement the resolution and is a State party to 12 international conventions aimed at preventing the spread of terrorism.

**Mr. Baumann** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Let me start my intervention with the topic of chemical weapons. Switzerland highly welcomes the agreement reached at last year's Review Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), according to which the aerosolized use of central nervous system-acting chemicals is considered inconsistent with the law enforcement purposes as a "purpose not prohibited" under the CWC. That decision constitutes a crucial step in mitigating new interest in the use of chemicals as weapons and thus the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Switzerland also commends the successful commencement of the open-ended working group for the preparation of the fifth CWC Review Conference. My country is fully committed to and will actively engage in that process with a view to strengthening the Convention.

Beyond those two considerations, I wish to point out that the latest reports of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and Fact-Finding Mission in Syria regarding the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria once again draw disturbing conclusions. In particular, after thorough investigations, the IIT convincingly concluded in its second report that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force used at least one chemical weapon in Saraqib on 4 February 2018. Switzerland is gravely concerned about these findings, condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons and underlines that their use is reprehensible, violates international law and is prohibited to all actors at all times and in all circumstances. Those responsible must be brought to justice. Switzerland calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW. We reiterate our full confidence in the work and findings of the Organization, which has consistently conducted its missions in a professional and impartial way and in full respect of its mandate.

The coronavirus disease pandemic reminded us of the devastating social and economic impact of a global disease outbreak. As a deliberate release of a biological agent could have effects of a similar magnitude, it is necessary to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The upcoming ninth Review Confer-

ence will provide the opportunity to do so. Institutional strengthening is a key issue in that context. Switzerland stands ready to engage in discussions on the potential for the elaboration of a legally binding instrument to reinforce the Convention. In addition, the intersessional process should be improved in order to make the BWC more action-oriented. We therefore support proposals that aim at delegating certain decision powers to the Meeting of States Parties. We also need to make sure that the Implementation Support Unit remains fit for purpose and potentially extend its mandate should the States parties decide to confer new tasks upon it.

For years, my country actively promoted the need for a dedicated science and technology advisory process in the framework of the BWC. There is broad support for such a mechanism, and we should now work on defining and agreeing on its specific features. Furthermore, we should move forward on the issue of a model code of conduct for scientists, the strengthening of confidence-building measures and the implementation of articles VII and X of the Convention. In the same vein, we need to bolster the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons and preserve its independence.

Before concluding, I wish to stress that Switzerland is fully convinced that the allegations made by the Russian Federation against Ukraine regarding biological and chemical weapons are unconvincing and in no way allow us to draw the conclusion that Ukraine's obligations under the BWC and the CWC have been violated. Switzerland condemns the dissemination of any unsubstantiated accusations that are aimed at undermining the international rules-based order and that threaten international cooperation and assistance under the BWC and the CWC.

**Mr. Miranda de la Peña** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation endorses the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/77/PV.11).

The global security architecture paradigm has completely changed. Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war against Ukraine is an attack on our shared principles and a grave violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Spain therefore strongly condemns it.

The risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a threat to international peace and security, and the international community must work harder

than ever to equip itself with the means necessary for a global response. The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is the lynchpin of efforts to eradicate the threat of proliferation of that type of weapon. We are nearing the start of the ninth BWC Review Conference, which will be an excellent opportunity to design an ambitious intersessional programme that ensures the strengthening of the Convention. In that context, in the absence of verification mechanisms, Spain considers it necessary to strengthen confidence-building measures of the Convention. In the short term, Spain hopes for the political will necessary to relaunch the negotiations to provide the Convention with an effective verification mechanism. The ninth Review Conference will also be an important occasion to promote the universalization of the Convention, which has yet to be accomplished and the status of which remains below the level of that of other instruments, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Spain stresses the need to continue improving the updating and implementation of specific measures in matters of biosafety and biosecurity at the national and international levels, in view of the great advances achieved in biotechnology and bioinformatics in recent years. Likewise, Spain highly values the operation of the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, whose work we hope will be recognized and strengthened after the Review Conference.

On the other hand, the Chemical Weapons Convention is one of few multilateral achievements in the field of disarmament. It prohibits an entire category of weapons, establishes a verification mechanism and enjoys a large degree of universalization. Thanks to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), practically all declared chemical arsenals have been eliminated. However, the recent use of that type of weapon in the context of internal armed conflicts, as well as for assassination purposes, constitutes a worrisome new challenge and should be categorically rejected by us all. There is no place for impunity; all such cases must be explained through exhaustive and transparent investigations.

The international community cannot remain impassive while these indiscriminate weapons are used. To that end, the destruction of chemical weapons in the past must be accompanied by the prevention of their future manufacture. The role of the OPCW is decisive for further progress in this area in the framework of

next year's Review Conference. With a view to visibly and effectively contributing to improved international cooperation and assistance, Spain will support specific multinational training and assistance projects to improve chemical safety. Another area of enhanced cooperation could be the OPCW contribution to global counter-terrorism efforts.

Spain supports the actions adopted within the framework of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which is essential to the development of effective mechanisms to eliminate and counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction among non-State actors for terrorist purposes. We therefore urge all States to comply with the legal obligations under the resolution, as well as resolutions 1673 (2006), 1810 (2008) and 1977 (2011).

Finally, Spain supports other mechanisms, such as the Group of Seven-led Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, and those designed to combat the risk of illicit trafficking of dual-use substances and technologies, including export control. All those international instruments are of great value to disarmament and non-proliferation, but their effectiveness depends to a large extent on the ability and willingness of their States parties to fully assume their obligations. Mr. Chair, you can count on the commitment of my country in this regard.

**Ms. Lee Hyun Goo** (Republic of Korea): This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The norms against any use of chemical and biological weapons should remain the core pillars of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The Republic of Korea is unwavering in its support for the Conventions and reiterates that the use of chemical or biological weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable.

The international community's achievement since the entry into force of the CWC in 1997 is remarkable. Approximately 99 per cent of all declared chemical weapons have been destroyed. The remaining will be destroyed by September 2023, verified by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). However, concerns remain. We are deeply concerned that the cooperation to address all outstanding issues between Syria and the OPCW

Technical Secretariat has been seriously hampered. My delegation urges Syria to immediately take necessary actions to redress the situation and comply with the Convention, as requested by relevant decisions at the Conference of the States Parties of the CWC. We appreciate the hard work of the OPCW Syria-related missions to investigate alleged incidents in a transparent, impartial and professional manner. The fifth Review Conference of the CWC, to be held next May, will provide a valuable opportunity to take stock of key achievements and challenges over the past five years and to chart the way forward. In that regard, my delegation would like to highlight the importance of enhancing the capacity of the OPCW and States parties to tackle fast-evolving chemical threats. We look forward to candid and constructive discussions among States parties.

Since the adoption of the BWC 50 years ago, we have witnessed the rapid advancement and development of science and technology, as well as relevant industries. Moreover, the global impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic has alerted the international community to heighten its readiness and preparedness against any potential bio-risks. The ninth BWC Review Conference this November comes at a critical juncture. The Review Conference should focus on strengthening the BWC regime to make it more resilient, practical and up-to-date. The Republic of Korea will work hand in hand with all States parties to achieve concrete outcomes at the Review Conference.

The Republic of Korea attaches great importance to establishing an independent, transparent and inclusive science and technology review mechanism. Also, we are in support of establishing guidelines to assist State parties that may request assistance in the framework of article VII of the Convention. We are also of the view that it is necessary to set voluntary guiding principles for scientists and to strengthen bio-risk management standards. For enhanced biosafety and biosecurity, each State party must implement the Convention to the full extent. In that regard, the Republic of Korea is actively implementing obligations under the BWC by submitting confidence-building measure reports, enacting domestic legislation, managing a reliable export control regime and building operational capabilities.

Moreover, we highly value the role of international cooperation and capacity-building. Accordingly, we have contributed to various capacity-building programmes and other programmes, including through

the Korea International Cooperation Agency, the Global Health Security Agenda and the Global Partnership. In particular, as President Yoon Suk Yeol stated at the General Assembly last month (see A/77/PV.4), Korea will host a ministerial Global Health Security Agenda meeting next month in Seoul.

The Republic of Korea expresses its deep concern about Russia's unfounded allegations regarding chemical or biological weapons, which may impede the full implementation of the Convention. We are also concerned that these may be precursors to the use of biological or chemical weapons. In that regard, we join the international community's call on Russia to immediately cease all military actions, withdraw all its forces from the territory of Ukraine and comply with all its obligations under the relevant international law.

On another note, my delegation expresses its strong support for the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons and its operationalization in line with the Secretary-General's 2018 Agenda for Disarmament. We support the related capacity-building activities for the experts and laboratories in the Mechanism.

**Mr. Štěpánek** (Czechia): The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/77/PV.11).

We once again condemn in the strongest possible terms the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which represents an unjustifiable breach of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law. The Russian invasion in Ukraine has considerably aggravated the risks related to weapons of mass destruction. That is deeply concerning. With regard to chemical weapons, we strongly condemn the disinformation campaign of Russia about the alleged plots by Ukraine to misuse toxic chemicals in the conflict. Those insinuations lack any factual basis. We call on Russia to stop creating such a disinformation fog, which is part of its effort to divert the attention of the international community from its inadmissible actions in Ukraine. Let us recall that it was in fact the leaders of the pro-Russian separatist forces that used unacceptable rhetoric threatening chemical weapons use during the Azovstal siege.

This is not the first time we see Russia trying to divert attention from chemical weapons use by its own agents or by its allies, notably the Syrian Arab Republic. By now, a total of 11 cases of proven use of chemical weapons in Syria have been established

through international investigation, the first six by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and four — so far — by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). While the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has been identified as the perpetrator in two cases, the remaining eight have been attributed to the Syrian armed forces.

It comes as no surprise that Syria, vehemently supported by Russia and its allies, should try to refute the factually and scientifically solid conclusions of those investigations. Their deliberate obfuscation must not divert us from considering the conclusions reached by the JIM and now by the IIT in all their seriousness. The policymaking organs of the OPCW have already acted within the Convention's remit in response to those most serious breaches of the Convention, namely, by depriving Syria of its voting rights. The OPCW, however, is not an accountability mechanism. It is the United Nations that should now act, based on the OPCW reports, to ensure justice for the victims and to end impunity for chemical weapons use.

Lastly, we have to recall that Russia used a military-grade nerve agent from the Novichok family against Sergei and Julia Skripal, in 2018, and against Alexei Navalny, in 2020. All those poisonings carried out by Russian agents constitute a flagrant breach of the Convention. We urge Russia to acknowledge its acts and ensure that they are not repeated.

Regarding biological weapons, we find ourselves in a critical period — the run-up to the ninth Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) Review Conference. The Czech Republic is a long-standing supporter of the BTWC. We expect the Review Conference to adopt decisions that will allow for the strengthening of the Convention. This is why we support the establishment of an open-ended working group with a two-year mandate, focused on exploring practical possibilities for such strengthening.

Science and technology developments in the area of biology are remarkable and the Convention needs to keep up with them in order to remain relevant. Establishing a science advisory mechanism under the BTWC is therefore among our priorities. Policy discourse must be based on objective and reliable scientific advice. We strongly encourage all States parties to approach the Review Conference in a forward-looking spirit and with readiness to look for consensual solutions.

We should not allow the Conference to be hijacked by the fabricated accusations that Russia has been putting forward over the past year in relation to capacity-building programmes run by the United States in Ukraine. We have carefully studied all the information provided by both the United States and Ukraine, as well as the numerous submissions by Russia, and found no credible evidence of illicit activities. On the contrary, the programmes on biosecurity are an example of good practice of international cooperation in that field.

**Mr. Ray (India):** Terrorism is a major challenge to international security and endangers the foundations of democratic societies. India is deeply concerned about the risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists and non-State actors. India supports the strengthening of efforts through international cooperation and within the United Nations framework to address it.

India has confronted terrorism for many decades. Its annual resolution, entitled “Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction”, focuses on the dangers of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the potential for their exploitation by terrorists and non-State actors. Submitted since 2002 and adopted by consensus, the resolution urges Member States to support international efforts, as well as to take and strengthen national measures, as appropriate, to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. India is very pleased that the resolution was adopted without a vote last year (resolution 76/28) and received the support of almost 92 sponsors and co-sponsors.

For its part, India has enacted comprehensive domestic legislation that effectively demonstrates India's firm commitment to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. India has a robust and effective national export-control system based on legislation, regulations and a controlled list of sensitive materials, equipment and technologies consistent with the highest international standards. India contributes to global non-proliferation efforts as a member of export-control regimes, including the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Australia Group.

India recognizes the important role of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) in supporting Member States' efforts to prevent access to weapons of mass destruction by



non-State actors. As a member of the 1540 Committee, we engage constructively to ensure that the renewed mandate of the Committee will enable it to assist Member States in enhancing their implementation of the resolution and in more effectively addressing the contemporary and evolving challenges related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems to non-State actors, in particular for terrorism.

India supports the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and its universalization. India believes that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anybody and under any circumstances cannot be justified. We believe that the impartiality and integrity of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) must be preserved and maintained under all circumstances. With a large and growing chemical industry, India is committed to upholding the objectives of the CWC and actively cooperates with the OPCW through regular inspections and by enhancing international cooperation and assistance.

India reiterates the high importance that it has always attached to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and to its universalization and full and effective implementation. We have actively participated in the intersessional processes of the BWC established under the Indian chairmanship in 2017. As we approach the ninth Review Conference, we reiterate our call for the institutional strengthening of the Convention, including the negotiation of a comprehensive and legally binding protocol providing for an effective, universal and non-discriminatory verification mechanism. India seeks the support of all Member States for its joint proposal with France for the establishment of a database to strengthen assistance, response and preparedness under article VII of the BWC and a decision on the proposal at the Review Conference. India believes that the effective implementation of article X could have equitable benefits for States parties, in particular developing countries. The financial health of the Convention must be placed on a sustainable footing by ensuring both the stability and the predictability of resources.

We seek the continued support of all Member States as sponsors and co-sponsors of the important initiatives that are embodied in India's draft resolution under the cluster "Other weapons of mass destruction" and for its adoption by consensus.

**Mr. Omarov (Kazakhstan):** Kazakhstan strongly condemns the existence of any weapons of mass destruction and reiterates that their continued existence is unacceptable. Therefore, the catastrophic consequences of their use must be prevented through their complete elimination by concerted and determined collective action. That is especially essential in the light of the rapidly developing technologies that can be beneficial but also destructive if misused.

We reaffirm the fundamental importance of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). Kazakhstan intends to continue working actively with all Member States and relevant international organizations to achieve the goals of the Convention, as well as its universalization. At the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, President Tokayev proposed the establishment of an international agency for biological safety, which would be guided in its activities by the BWC (see A/75/PV.6). The concept note, distributed last year by the Kazakh missions in Geneva and here in New York, offers a common vision for the mandate, objectives and functioning of that agency. The proposal saw an in-depth discussion during the expert meetings of the BWC this April in Geneva. Since then, we have received positive and constructive feedback from delegations that consider the concept note to be a good basis for further discussions.

At the upcoming BWC Review Conference, scheduled later this year, the Republic of Kazakhstan plans to introduce a proposal for the creation of a working group on the international agency for biological safety. Having said that, we kindly request BWC States parties to join and support this initiative. We are open and ready to listen to all interested parties, and will keep working constructively, transparently and steadily on this issue. We will adhere to the views and decisions expressed to foster dialogue among the BWC States parties.

We reaffirm that the Chemical Weapons Convention, BWC and 1925 Geneva Protocol are vital international legal instruments to guide multilateral efforts. They guide us in our struggle towards the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction by providing strict and effective international controls.

Kazakhstan continues to support the important goal of achieving a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We hope that the upcoming third session of the Conference

on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, pursuant to its General Assembly mandate, will further maintain the positive momentum gained during the previous two sessions.

Our country also fulfils its obligations under Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and especially one of its central requirements, namely, the creation of an effective national system of export control over the transfer of goods and technologies. The national export control system of Kazakhstan is being constantly improved in accordance with best practices, in consultation with other States, as well as regional and international organizations, and complies with the strictest requirements. Kazakhstan will continue to honour its commitments and reaffirms the need for the global community to address ways to eliminate all types of weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with international law, in an impartial and transparent manner.

**Mr. Yakut (Türkiye):** The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the risk of the acquisition of those weapons by non-State actors continue to be a matter of grave concern for international peace and security. We need to do our utmost to prevent such risks by preserving the authority of existing multilateral disarmament instruments and their verification mechanisms. Türkiye remains strongly committed to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which plays a central role in the global non-proliferation architecture. We look forward to a successful outcome of the ongoing comprehensive review process. Taking part in all four export control regimes, Türkiye diligently implements its responsibilities and highlights the value of having robust export-control mechanisms in place.

Unfortunately, the global norm against the use of chemical weapons has been under great strain, despite the fact that this year we celebrate 25 years since the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Türkiye emphasizes the fact that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances is a crime against humanity and a grave violation of international law. We condemn in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons, which has re-emerged in certain parts of the world. The case of Syria is particularly worrisome, as it is the country where in the last decade the bulk of the serious violations of the CWC has occurred and the risk of their recurrence persists.

The United Nations-Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Joint Investigative Mechanism and the reports of the Investigation and Identification Team have established that the Syrian regime is responsible for chemical weapons use on at least eight occasions. The Syrian regime must comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, present an accurate declaration of all its stockpiles and production facilities and completely destroy them. It should also fulfil its responsibilities by cooperating with the OPCW, provide unfettered access to the OPCW investigation teams and facilitate their work on the ground, not rather than obstruct it. Impunity in Syria simply cannot be tolerated. My country continues to support efforts to ensure accountability for those responsible for chemical attacks, including through the International partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. We reiterate our strong support for the integrity, independence and professionalism of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We regret to see increasing attempts in recent years to discredit the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its investigative bodies.

Türkiye underscores its strong support for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and encourages efforts towards its universalization. The ninth BTWC Review Conference will be a timely opportunity to strengthen the BTWC regime. We are ready to contribute to achieving a tangible outcome at the Review Conference in November.

Last but not least, we would like to highlight the importance of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. The Mechanism has already proved useful in 2013. Its integrity and independence are crucial for accountability; hence, it must be preserved.

**Mr. Ogasawara (Japan):** Japan remains fully committed to multilateral efforts related to arms control, disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, as they are crucial to achieving regional and global peace and stability. Japan stresses the importance of reinforcing the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and other relevant regimes, as the use of such weapons must not be permitted under any circumstances.

Our calendar leading up to next year's First Committee will be marked by two very significant conferences, namely, the ninth BWC Review Conference

this year and the fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the CWC next year. Japan is looking forward to cooperating with other States parties and to contributing to tangible outcomes at both of these Conferences.

The repeated use of chemical weapons in recent years is a serious issue, and the international community must be united in condemning any use of chemical weapons. In that regard, Japan continues to urge the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure accountability by addressing all outstanding issues. Japan will also continue collaborating with other States parties to the CWC to deal with the use of chemical weapons and prevent their further use.

Japan commits itself to the destruction of its abandoned chemical weapons, in line with its obligation under the CWC, and has invested huge financial resources, amounting to approximately €3 billion, to cover all related costs associated with that national operation. Japan has been making consistent progress in that regard, with the successful destruction of approximately 60,000 abandoned chemical weapons items out of the 90,000 recovered. Despite the impact of the pandemic, the project continues, with constructive bilateral cooperation and coordination with China.

Indeed, the coronavirus disease pandemic demonstrates the detrimental and global impact that would be caused by any potential biological weapons use. States parties to the BWC have been cooperatively and constructively discussing possible measures to strengthen the Convention. As part of those efforts, Japan chaired the 2020 meeting of experts related to the review of relevant science and technology. We remain firmly committed to contributing to success at the ninth Review Conference and to strengthening the Convention and its implementation. From that point of view, Japan is co-sponsoring the proposal to establish a temporary experts working group, submitted by Canada and the Netherlands to the ninth Review Conference, which could finally break through the 20-year stagnation of the BWC regime discussion.

Japan has also undertaken a number of international cooperation initiatives based on article X of the BWC, including in partnership with the Implementation Support Unit. For instance, in March, Japan organized capacity-building workshops in Geneva, bringing together various Asian countries to enhance preparedness for and response to the use of biological weapons.

Japan appreciates the sincere and constructive manner in which Ukraine and the United States of America took part in the BWC article V formal consultative meeting in September. Japan is of the view that this consultation was duly conducted and required no follow-up actions. Japan is also deeply convinced that the consultation mechanism should not be abused for political purposes with flimsy or even fabricated allegations. Furthermore, Japan supports the concept of preserving and strengthening the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, as it is the only available tool to independently investigate any case of biological weapon attacks.

Japan also underlines the importance of implementing Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) as a basis for tackling the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors. Japan contributed approximately \$1 million to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to promote its implementation, and part of the contribution was utilized for the appointment of Ms. Amanda Cowl as the first Regional Coordinator to promote implementation in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan will continue to support the implementation of the resolution beyond the next comprehensive review to be conducted in 2022.

**Mr. Padilla** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.11).

The total elimination and prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction in a verifiable, irreversible and transparent manner is the only way to prevent their development, transfer and use. We reiterate our firm commitment to promoting general and complete disarmament, in accordance with the principles of our foreign policy, as endorsed by the Constitution of the Republic, which establishes that Cuba rejects the existence, proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction or other weapons with similar effects.

Cuba does not and does not intend to possess any weapons of mass destruction. We reject the use of such weapons by any actor in any circumstances. We reiterate the full support of our country for existing multilateral regimes that prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Cuba was an original signatory and is a State party to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

We rigorously and comprehensively implement all provisions of those international instruments and advocate their full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. In that regard, we reiterate our strong condemnation of the imposition of coercive unilateral measures that contravene both Conventions by limiting or impeding the promotion and development of international cooperation and scientific and technological progress of member States in the areas of biology and chemistry. We reject the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, which not only causes numerous difficulties for the Cuban people but also violates article X of the BWC and article XI of the CWC.

We support the adoption of a legally binding instrument that prohibits biological weapons and includes a verification mechanism that strengthens the BWC. If it were not for the obstructive stance of the United States in 2001, we would have such an instrument today. We reject selectivity, bias and politically motivated approaches in the implementation of the CWC. At the same time, we oppose the establishment of mechanisms and processes that supersede the technical mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We call on the United States, the only possessor of chemical weapons, to destroy its declared arsenal within the specified time frame and under strict international verification.

We encourage the use of the upcoming ninth BWC and fifth Review Conferences of the States Parties to the CWC as spaces conducive to their full and strengthened implementation. We hope that the spirit of consensus will prevail at those events despite politicization and confrontation. Cuba will continue to abide by its obligations fully in terms of biological and chemical disarmament, in accordance with the relevant conventions. We will continue to advocate a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

**Mr. Molnár** (Hungary): I have asked for the floor to introduce briefly draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.74, on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and Their Destruction (BTWC), a fundamental pillar of the international community's effort against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Hungary, following the practice of previous years, has submitted the draft resolution on the BTWC. In addition to the technical updates, this year's

draft resolution contains a new preambular paragraph on the article V formal consultative meeting of the States parties requested by the Russian Federation and convened at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 26 August and reconvened from 5 to 9 September.

Hungary wishes to remain the sole sponsor of the BTWC draft resolution. I would like to take this opportunity to express our hope that the draft resolution will be again adopted by consensus, as it has been each year so far. In that context, I would like to emphasize that by doing so, the international community reaffirms its unequivocal support for the prohibition of biological weapons and confirms its conviction that the Convention is a fundamental pillar of the international community's efforts against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In our statement delivered in the general debate (see A/C.1/77/PV.5), we drew attention to the importance of the positive outcome of the ninth Review Conference of the BTWC. I cannot but emphasize the importance of adopting this year's draft resolution yet again by consensus, which would send a positive signal to the Review Conference.

**Mr. Al Ashkar** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.11).

In 1968, the Syrian Arab Republic acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It signed the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in 1972 and acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 2013, based on its deeply held rejection of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and in any circumstances. That also applies to Syria's effort to make the Middle East a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. In 2003, during its membership of the Security Council, Syria introduced a draft resolution seeking to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The draft was obstructed by the United States of America.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the main obstacle to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is Israel's intransigence and continued refusal to accede to any treaty or convention related to non-proliferation, with the tutelage and encouragement



of the United States and its allies, along with their protection of its nuclear, biological and chemical military programmes. Indeed, they contribute to their development and enhancement.

Being the sole party that possesses weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and that refuses to accede to all main treaties and conventions related to the prohibition and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction makes Israel the main source of threat to peace and security in the region.

The Syrian Arab Republic has honoured its obligations under the CWC in record time through complete and full cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). However, it is regrettable that some States have deliberately and scandalously politicized the chemical file, either through continued baseless allegations against Syria or by casting doubts on Syria's cooperation with the Organization. In addition, those States have relied on reports of the Organization that lack professionalism and credibility. Those States have also manipulated the provisions of the Convention to establish illegal mechanisms and adopt a resolution against Syria at the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of States Parties. That set a dangerous precedent in the work of the Organization. The use by some Western States of the OPCW as a tool to implement their political agendas has led the Organization to deviate from its technical work and the objectives for which it was established and caused a state of division and polarization that significantly undermines its professionalism and credibility.

In the light of the serious threats and risks of the acquisition by terrorist groups of chemical weapons, the Syrian Arab Republic has addressed hundreds of letters to the Secretary-General, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and other committees on combating terrorism. Those letters include important information about the acquisition by armed terrorist groups of chemical material and their use against civilians on dozens of occasions. In view of the importance of reaching an international, collective and coordinated response to the threat of the acquisition by terrorist groups of weapons of mass destruction, and in view of the insufficiency of the current legal frameworks to establish an international, effective and legally binding mechanism, there is a dire need to address the shortcomings of the relevant international instruments through the conclusion of a convention to coordinate international efforts to combat acts of biological and chemical terrorism. In that

context, my delegation supports the Russian proposal in the Conference on Disarmament containing a draft convention on that purpose.

My delegation believes that the failure of the international community to face the challenges and risks of the acquisition by terrorists of weapons of mass destruction sends them the wrong message and encourages them to seek to acquire those weapons and to use them in their terrorist acts.

**Ms. Maayan** (Israel): The foundations of arms control and non-proliferation continue to be challenged by rogue States. It begins with the lack of commitment by States to fulfilling their obligations in good faith for a better and safer world, and continues with blatant non-compliance with existing norms. The Middle East struggles with a chronic lack of compliance with non-proliferation and arms control norms, obligations and mechanisms. That culture of non-compliance and disregard for international obligations and norms has, regrettably, become both common and dangerous in our region. There is an ongoing and urgent need to act upon this and focus international efforts on the implementation, compliance and verification of States' obligations in accordance with their undertakings under global disarmament mechanisms.

The use of chemical weapons by States in the Middle East, against their own population and against neighbouring countries, has occurred numerous times since the Second World War. Those events have constituted a clear violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. Furthermore, two additional cases of regional Member States violating the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) are still in question and need to be further investigated. Towards that end, the international community should strongly support the important work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its bodies. Israel is a party to the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and a signatory State to the CWC. Israel supports the important work of the OPCW and has a long-standing record of cooperation with and showing support for relevant United Nations bodies in that regard.

Despite the chemical weapon disarmament process in Syria, from 2014 onwards we have witnessed hundreds of incidents in which chemical weapons were used in Syria by Al-Assad against the Syrian population. In the past four years, the OPCW Investigation

and Identification Team (IIT) mechanism has been investigating specific incidents concerning the usage of chemical weapons in Syria. Two IIT reports, from April 2020 and April 2021, attributed responsibility for five different chemical attacks on civilians that took place in 2017 and 2018 to the Syrian Government, which had previously acceded to the CWC and avowed to forgo its entire chemical weapons programme. The IIT's reports came after several reports and findings of the Declaration Assessment Team, the Fact-Finding Mission and the Joint Investigative Mechanism, which the concerned international community established after the first time Syria used chemical weapons on its own citizens in 2012. The IIT's reports clearly call upon the Syrian Government to cooperate with the OPCW and the international community in rectifying the gaps and discrepancies in its declaration on chemical weapons, as well as to take full responsibility and to be held accountable for its actions in violation of its obligations under the CWC and with regard to the destruction of its chemical weapons arsenal.

The IIT continues its vital activity, and despite the lack of cooperation from Syria, is expected to issue additional reports on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma and Marea, which will likely testify to the crimes of Al-Assad. It is of importance to support the OPCW technical teams and ensure accountability. Syria's statement to the OPCW has been changed nearly 20 times, and even today it cannot be considered a complete statement. It is clear that Syria still has chemical weapon capabilities and that it has never deserted its ambition to acquire further such capabilities. Syria's lack of cooperation with the OPCW investigative teams, as well as the continued concealment and deception, raise a real fear that there is a significant residual chemical array in Syria and perhaps more than that. It is vital that the international community remain vigilant in dealing with the challenge of Syria's non-compliance in order to prevent the further erosion of the absolute norm against the use of chemical weapons and to reinstate this norm.

**Ms. Udom** (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/77/PV.11) and would like to add the following remarks in a national capacity.

Ireland reaffirms its unyielding support for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) as key instruments in the international community's efforts to achieve a world

free of all weapons of mass destruction. We call on those remaining States that have not yet joined these instruments to accede to them without any further delay.

Ireland condemns the conduct of the illegal invasion of Ukraine. Russia has engaged in dangerous weapons of mass destruction disinformation campaigns across multiple forums against Ukraine, the United States of America and others. Russia's disinformation efforts in that area risk undermining essential multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation instruments upon which our collective security depends. Ireland will continue to denounce such baseless claims.

On this twenty-fifth anniversary year of the CWC's entry into force, Ireland is unwavering in its commitment to upholding the international prohibition on chemical weapons, including as a member of the Security Council and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council. Ireland fully supports the OPCW, and we reject efforts to undermine its work or legitimacy. We are strongly committed to achieving an outcome based on consensus at the fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the CWC next year. We will continue to work with the Organization and with the international community to ensure that there can be no impunity for those who use these illegal and abhorrent weapons.

Ireland keenly awaits the opportunity to strengthen the BWC at the ninth Review Conference this winter. There can be no doubt of the urgency of our work. Developments since the last Review Conference, in particular the coronavirus disease crisis, have illustrated in the starkest terms that biological threats will not discriminate in our increasingly interconnected world. The ninth Review Conference represents an opportunity to improve biosafety and biosecurity globally and to advance assistance, cooperation, response and the preparedness of the States parties. Our efforts must be truly global and cooperative in order to achieve the aims of the Convention. Ireland also emphasizes its strong support for the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, which has its basis in the mandate given by the General Assembly and endorsed by the Security Council. The Mechanism is effective, efficient and carries out its work with integrity, independence and impartiality.

Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) remains an essential tool in the fight against non-State actors seeking to acquire and use weapons of mass destruction. Ireland

urges all States to fully implement their obligations and fulfil their responsibilities under this resolution. In that regard, we welcome the strong engagement of States to date in the ongoing comprehensive review of resolution 1540 (2004). Strengthening the international non-proliferation regime is vital for Ireland and we recognize export control as essential to countering the spread and use of weapons of mass destruction. Ireland strongly supports key export control regimes, including the Australia Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement, as well as The Hague Code of Conduct. Robust export controls facilitate legitimate trade and support international cooperation on peaceful uses of nuclear, chemical and biological materials. We recognize the contribution of those regimes towards ensuring a safer and more secure world.

**Mr. Gimolieca** (Angola): Angola signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction in 2015 and ratified it in the same year. Since then, Angola has been committed to ensuring their control in its legislation. As a State member of the instrument, we are committed to creating conditions and legal mechanisms to achieve the objectives advocated by the founding States of the Convention with a view to prohibiting chemical weapons, which represent an obstacle to the social and economic development of our countries. In that regard, we established our national authority for arms control and disarmament and as a national civil protection commission, which, in partnership with other, similar bodies, have worked to meet the commitments assumed under the international instruments and to implement national obligations. Those two bodies have contributed to providing better guidance and direction for the sector's activities in the country through our national strategy for action for arms control and disarmament, as well as chemical emergency response.

Angola, as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, has taken important steps in the process of implementing the Convention, especially article X, through the promotion of and participation in training, in line with the online self-assessment tool programme, which allows countries to identify gaps in their national systems and measures to improve their protection against accidents, incidents and attacks involving chemicals. To assist in the implementation of this article, Angola has participated in chemical emergency response workshops and training, having recently

hosted the first stage of the training cycle in assistance and protection for Portuguese-speaking member States — the basic course with respect to emergency and chemical incident response — which took place in Luanda this year.

My country is concerned about issues related to the training of personnel in the field of the control of chemical weapons and its aspects and decided to join other countries that have voluntarily contributed by providing €25,000 euros to finance the construction of the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology — the ChemTech Centre — based in The Hague, in the Netherlands, which is aimed at giving greater dignity to the equipment and training at the service of the OPCW. In this sense, we express our support for the initiative of draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.55, on the implementation of the Convention.

**Ms. Quintero Correa** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are principles of the foreign policy of Colombia and its constitutional mandates. Faithful to the tradition of respect for international law, the promotion of peaceful resolution of disputes and as part of our commitment to total peace as a pillar of our foreign policy and self-definition as a force for life, Colombia advocates the total elimination and prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction. We condemn the use of such weapons by any actor, in any place, in any circumstance. We highlight the need for the relevant bodies to investigate incidents or attacks involving chemical and biological weapons, in accordance with the legal instruments on the subject. Moreover, the perpetrators of such acts should be held to account.

We highlight the relevance of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is the appropriate forum for discussing and investigating instances and purported instances of the use of these types of arms, and we should seek to strengthen it. As a current member of OPCW Executive Council, Colombia supports the strengthening and the universalization the Convention, as well as greater cooperation and technical assistance, in accordance with article X. We highlight the capacity-building activities of the States parties in Latin America and the Caribbean that have been put forward by the Technical Secretariat, which have provided tools to facilitate effective implementation of the Convention nationally and to generate opportunities for cooperation across the region and experience-sharing on the subject.

We underscore the relevance of the Biological Weapons Convention and call for greater and more constructive participation at the next Review Conference, which will be an opportunity to strengthen and assess international implementation and compliance with this instrument. We are of the view that related and dual-use materials should be discussed at the Review Conference. We are concerned about the control and responsible use of any biological materials that can be used as precursors for biological weapons. In order for the Convention to be effectively implemented, national measures must be adopted to regulate related materials, in addition to strengthening export and import control policies, as well as transshipments of dangerous goods. States parties must bolster national accounting mechanisms for biological materials handled across their territory to prevent their diversion to actors with malicious intent. It is important to adopt measures to prevent, detect, investigate and penalize the financing of terrorism. International cooperation for national and regional capacity-building in relation to epidemiological monitoring, biocontainment and investigation is similarly important. It is also necessary to bolster State capacity to prevent and respond to biothreats.

The coronavirus disease pandemic and its consequences for health, economies and societies have laid out the need to promote solidarity and multilateral cooperation. We highlight the need to work in disarmament forums to strengthen the mechanisms for cooperation and implementation of mutual confidence-building measures in the peaceful use of nuclear, chemical and biological science and technologies. We reiterate the need to work towards safeguarding the legal instruments in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as the need for strict verification and the strengthening of the established regimes. Those represent areas of success in which we need to make progress towards complete elimination and prohibition of such weapons.

In conclusion, we highlight the need to incorporate a gender perspective in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation policies and programmes. The participation of women in designing and implementing policies is important, and we must recognize the fundamental role that women play in peacebuilding and security.

**Mr. Tun** (Myanmar): We associate ourselves with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement

of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/C.1/77/PV.11).

Myanmar reaffirms its commitment to a world free of all weapons of mass destruction. We call upon all States to fully implement all relevant treaties. Notwithstanding some setbacks, we have had noticeable successes in curbing the spread of nuclear weapons, thanks to the global non-proliferation architecture and the fact that nuclearization requires highly advanced industrial capabilities and access to tightly controlled materials, which are not within the easy reach of most States. On the other hand, the path to chemical and biological weapons is easier and cheaper than developing a nuclear bomb, as the fabrication of the poor man's atomic bomb can be done using equipment and materials that have a host of civilian applications. Those weapons have become the best alternative to nuclear weapons for potential rogue States and non-State actors, and we must redouble our efforts to stop their proliferation.

We hail the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) as the first major international treaty that outlaws an entire category of weapons of mass destruction with a strong verification mechanism. We commend the tireless efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the destruction of 99 per cent of declared chemicals. We call for the promotion of international cooperation in the field of chemistry not prohibited under the CWC. We believe that such cooperation will not only enhance the industrial and economic development of the parties involved, but also facilitate the implementation of the CWC.

Myanmar strongly condemns any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstance, and stresses that the perpetrators must be held accountable. Therefore, it is imperative for all of us to make the utmost efforts to strengthen further the existing mechanisms to bring perpetrators to justice without fail.

As a State party to the CWC, Myanmar was in the process of drafting the Chemical Weapons Law, and it is unfortunate that this process has been halted by the illegal military coup in February 2021. In addition, the Myanmar military in the past reportedly engaged in a chemical programme that manufactured a sizeable amount of schedule 1 chemicals. The information we have indicates that a facility under the complete control of the military near Tongbo in the Bago



region produced sulphur mustard in the 1980s. That programme has never been disclosed by the military to the civilian Government. Just some months before the coup, the civilian Government of Myanmar convinced the military to come clean about the programme. The military has never been transparent about its past chemical weapon programme and has also failed to be a good partner for nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. What is more, not only its history but also its current brutal and inhumane crimes against the innocent civilians of Myanmar show the world that the military will not hesitate to carry out serious threats against our people and beyond.

We highly appreciate the important role of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Implementation Support Unit. At the same time, we cannot emphasize enough the need to strengthen the BWC. The lack of a verification system is a hindrance to the effectiveness and relevance of the treaty. We call for all State parties to work towards the commencement of negotiations for a non-discriminatory, legally binding protocol on an effective and practical verification system.

Last but not least, it is also important for all of us to keep track of emerging new technologies that may give rise to new types of weapons of mass destruction that have destructive effects comparable to those of existing weapons of mass destruction.

**Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine):** The delegation of Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. We would now like to make some remarks in our national capacity.

Ukraine advocates strict adherence to the provisions of the key international instruments in the field of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), including the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) and the 1925 Geneva Protocol.

Ukraine strongly condemns the use of the chemical weapons in Syria. Syria should fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and ensure its full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We also denounce the use of chemical weapons in the United Kingdom and Russia.

As a State with a nuclear-weapon past and a fully fledged party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the CWC and the BWC, Ukraine adheres to the provisions of resolution 1540 (2004). Since its adoption 18 years ago, Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) has played an important role in strengthening global and regional non-proliferation efforts.

Russia continues to wage a full-scale war against Ukraine. Russian troops are systematically violating the norms of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, their use as hostages and human shields, executions, rapes, forceful conscription and kidnapping, attacks on medical personnel and facilities and the use of banned weapons.

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine is a serious challenge to the WMD regime. The continuous shelling of Ukrainian peaceful nuclear, chemical and other facilities by the Russian forces poses a genuine threat to the integrity and physical protection of sensitive materials.

The Russian Federation has made a large number of completely false allegations of chemical-weapons use by Ukraine. They have made baseless accusations of conspiracies. None of those are true, and Russia has offered no evidence.

In that respect, since the beginning of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, it has also become common practice for Russia to spread within the OPCW and the United Nations fake information about Ukraine's alleged preparation for the use of toxic chemical agents against its own population. Russia's baseless narratives concerning the alleged development of programmes related to weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine, including experiments with biological agents, are primarily intended to justify the unleashing of its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as diverting the international community's attention from the egregious crimes committed by Russia on the territory of our independent and sovereign State. Russia is failing to achieve its goals on the battlefield and is becoming increasingly desperate. There is a real risk that, terrified of defeat, Russian troops may use WMDs as a last resort.

Ukraine has never developed, produced or stored biological weapons alone or together with someone else. It has never had such intentions. My country does not possess the relevant infrastructure for the development and production of biological weapons on its territory.

All Russia's actions are aimed at undermining the credibility and integrity of the CWC and the BWC. The consultative meeting within the BWC convened in September was used by Russia as propaganda against Ukraine and the United States. Following the conclusion of that meeting, we deemed that the issue was fully concluded.

We reiterate our call on the international community to increase its pressure on Russia to make it immediately stop its full-scale war of aggression and withdraw all its troops from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

**Mr. Sajjadih** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I will focus only on the current agenda item and will not mix it with the cluster "Nuclear weapons",

*(spoke in French)*

like some representatives.

*(spoke in English)*

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.14).

While reaffirming its commitment to a world free of chemical weapons, Iran condemns their use anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances. We also support the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Convention is a unique international agreement that bans a whole class of weapons of mass destruction and has a verification system in the field of disarmament. Despite all its ups and downs, the Convention has made significant progress since it came into force.

It is quite worrisome that a recent development has seriously damaged the Convention as a whole. A particular group of State parties has turned the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) from a technical organization into one that is politicized and confrontation to further their political goals. If that approach were to persist, it would seriously and negatively affect the Convention's goals. In terms of the main pillar of the Convention, it is imperative that the United States — the sole possessor State — take all the measures necessary to expedite the completion of the destruction of its remaining chemical stockpiles, as required under the Convention.

It should also be emphasized that the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States against Iran have unfortunately impaired access to necessary medicines and equipment for Iranian victims of chemical weapons. As the largest victim of chemical weapons in contemporary history, Iran attaches permanent importance to article X and its humanitarian objectives.

Furthermore, developing States parties should be assisted in their capacity-building. That goal cannot be accomplished until developing States parties engage in meaningful international cooperation and make clear commitments. A crucial component in achieving the Convention's goals is the full, effective and non-discriminating implementation of article XI. It must be noted that arbitrary export-control mechanisms, along with the illegal and unjustified unilateral coercive measures, are inconsistent with the objective of the Convention. The voting decisions made in recent years at the OPCW are not a good sign of its global credibility.

Furthermore, the viability of the CWC, as well as the OPCW, requires enforcing a consistent and apolitical approach. It is not just to put pressure on Syria, while implementing its obligations based on the Convention and cooperation with the OPCW. In the meantime, turning a blind eye to the clandestine chemical arsenal of the Israeli regime is not acceptable.

In that context, some States parties' unrestricted trading of chemicals with a regime that is not a party to the CWC poses a challenge to the universality of the CWC and establishing a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Iran considers that maintaining the consensus-building tradition, avoiding politicization and fully and effectively implementing all the Convention's provisions are the best way to strengthen the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. Other approaches include promoting universality and fostering international cooperation on the peaceful use of chemistry, as well as strengthening capacities for assistance and protection.

With regard to natural disease outbreaks, the result of laboratory accidents and the deliberate use of diseases as a weapon are just a few examples of the diverse and ever-evolving biological threat expansion. Iran is a staunch supporter of the BWC and calls for its balanced, full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation to sustain the current international

framework. After the United States objection to strengthening the BWC in 1996, the resumption of the negotiation on the legally binding protocol for the Convention is subject to withdrawing the United States objection to strengthening the Convention and its reservation to 1925 Geneva Protocol. Like other similar instruments, the universality of the Convention requires the accession of the Israeli regime to the BWC and adherence to its obligations. Otherwise, security in the Middle East will be in danger due to the threat of this regime.

**The Chair:** The Committee has just heard the last speaker on the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction”.

I shall now call on those who have requested to exercise the right of reply. In that connection, I would like to remind delegations of the time limitations and request that we economize on the little time we have.

**Mr. Vorontsov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation categorically refutes all attempts by the United States and its allies to cast doubt on the convincing materials and rationale we submitted at the consultative meeting of States parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), under its article V. That event was initiated by the Russian Federation as a result of the well-founded questions that arose regarding the honouring of BTWC obligations by the United States and Ukraine in the context of biological laboratory activities in Ukraine. We believe that the very fact that the discussion took place and its substantive nature attest to the fact that the issue is very topical. It concerns not just Russia, but the international community as a whole.

Throughout the special military operation, the Russian Federation received a number of documents and witness accounts shedding light on the true nature of cooperation between the Pentagon and its contractors and the Ukrainians in the military and biological sphere. We submitted that information on the many briefings held by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation in great detail. Those materials point to the fact that the United States and Ukraine are not complying with their BTWC obligations.

When we initiated the consultative meeting, we took as our starting point the fact that the event would allow for interested delegations, with the support of experts, to get to the bottom of the situation, to exchange assessments, to look at the issues from a professional

standpoint and to get extensive answers. Russia did everything within its power to provide detailed information and rationale to ensure that the consultative meeting would achieve its stated objectives and manage to resolve the situation related to the military biological activities on the territory of Ukraine. We were hoping to obtain all of the necessary clarifications from the United States and Ukraine on the issues we raised. We also wanted to prompt Washington and Kyiv to take comprehensive, exhaustive measures to fix this state of affairs.

Following the consultative meeting, we saw that the overwhelming majority of claims that the Russian Federation put forward did not get a proper answer from the United States or Ukraine. As the outcome document of the consultative meeting states, we did not manage to garner consensus. That means that those issues remain outstanding and need to be resolved. Unless we resolve them, the very credibility of the consultative mechanism under article V and the BTWC regime as a whole might be undermined.

The behaviour of the Americans and their Ukrainian mentees at that meeting raised a lot of questions. They alternated between making themselves out to be victims of unfounded attacks and then asking to us to apologize, using openly coarse language and trying to change the subject. In other words, they did everything they could to make sure that the event would be a failure. But they did not manage to achieve their goal. We believe that the cavalier destructive behaviour of the United States and Ukraine at the consultative meeting was geared towards ensuring that the Pentagon's unbridled military biological activities could continue, including those beyond their national territory, that is, right next to Russia. Their attempts to justify those activities as being “purely peaceful” and “having nothing to do” with biological weapons are not borne out by the facts. It is just another attempt for them to distort the facts and to divert the international community's attention from the real risks we run as a result of the activities of the United States Department of Defense that are at odds with the BTWC — that is, the so-called Cooperative Biological Threat Reduction programme.

In order to resolve the situation resulting from the military and biological activities on Ukrainian territory, we believe it is necessary to continue discussing this issue within the framework of the BTWC, including by discussing the outcome of the consultative meeting and the interested States' additional comments at the ninth

Review Conference. We believe it is necessary not to restrict ourselves to consultations and an exchange of opinions. Instead, we need to harness all of the tools we have at our disposal under the Convention, including article VI of the BTWC, in order to investigate the breaches of the Convention by Ukraine and the United States.

The consultative meeting also demonstrated the acute necessity of strengthening the BTWC regime. First, of course, we need to resume discussions on an internationally legally binding protocol to the Convention so as to set up an effective verification mechanism. Those efforts have been blocked by the United States since 2001, and it is clear why. Washington does not want its military biological activities, which are a breach of the Convention, to become common knowledge and for the international community to learn about them.

We need to take other steps as well. The Russian Federation has long asked to include, under confidence-building measures, information about military biological activities undertaken beyond national borders in the annual reporting of States parties to the Convention. Such comprehensive measures are the only way that we can place the military and biological activities of the United States and their allies in various regions of the world, including post-Soviet States, under strict international control and verifiably ensure that BTWC States parties honour their obligations under the Convention.

**Ms. McKernan** (United States of America): I take the floor to respond to Russia and China's continued efforts to malign completely permissible international cooperation and assistance activities.

In my country's right of reply yesterday (see A/C.1/77/PV.14), we addressed the question of the full, transparent and constructive participation between the United States and Ukraine in the recent Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) article V consultations, so I will not repeat those points.

I wish to emphasize that the United States, in fulfilling its obligations under the BWC, will continue to assist partners around the world to strengthen global health security and reduce the impacts of infectious diseases on our societies, consistent with article X of the Convention. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has underscored the importance of strong national capacities for infectious disease surveillance,

diagnosis and response. International cooperation and assistance, such as that provided by the United States to dozens of partners around the world, including under the United States Department of Defense Cooperative Threat Reduction programme, play a critical role in building those capacities.

As we have stated previously, those partnerships are devoted exclusively to peaceful purposes and have nothing to do with weapons. Those partnerships protect the health of humans and animals in our countries, including in the prevention, detection and control of infectious disease outbreaks and in enhancing laboratory biosafety and biosecurity. Such cooperation should not be undermined, but rather promoted and reinforced.

Baseless accusations for propaganda purposes undermine and politicize greatly needed collaboration in the area of strengthening global public health and harm efforts to fully implement article X of the BWC, related to international cooperation and assistance. Let us be clear that the spurious, unfounded accusations by Russia, China and others are an attack not just on the United States, but also against the dozens of partner countries with which we work. That is both unacceptable and reprehensible.

Several delegations also raised questions today about my country's efforts to destroy its chemical-weapon stockpile. The United States completed the destruction of over 98 per cent of its declared stockpile. In April, the last VX munitions in the United States stockpile were destroyed. The United States remains on track to meet the planned completion date of 30 September 2023. The United States has demonstrated extraordinary transparency about plans to destroy our fully declared chemical-weapon stockpile, and we continue to review all opportunities to accelerate our planned completion date. We have also taken extraordinary steps to maintain a continuous presence of inspectors of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons at both of our destruction facilities in order to ensure continued verified destruction of our declared stockpile, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The United States is also committed to the destruction of all chemical weapons around the world and has provided substantial aid and support to numerous countries in the destruction of their chemical weapons. To cite just one example, in the past years, we have contributed more than \$3 billion to assist the Russian Federation in completing the destruction of its own declared chemical weapons stockpiles.



**Mr. Al Ashkar** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked for the floor to respond to the allegations levelled against my country by some delegations regarding the use of chemical weapons and cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

At the outset, I categorically reject the accusations against my country, which we consider fabricated and baseless. They fall within the context of politicizing the OPCW's work and its exploitation to achieve the political interests of the States that launch them. Syria has often stressed its rejection of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, in any circumstances and anywhere. The statements of those States that level accusations against Syria ignore the continuous cooperation between Syria and the OPCW. I will not dwell on explaining Syria's cooperation with and constructive response to the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

Syria has repeatedly confirmed that it does not recognize the legitimacy of the so-called Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). We believe that the Team was created in the context of aggressive plans targeting Syria. The Western countries that worked to establish it have intentionally and completely overlooked Syria's cooperation with the OPCW and made false accusations against us of non-compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We believe that the decision to establish the Team was politicized par excellence and will not serve the objectives of the Convention; rather, it is a sorry example of the OPCW's dealings with its States parties and of how it succumbs to the influence of Western countries.

I recall my country's firm commitment to the issues of non-proliferation and disarmament of weapons of mass destruction. In 1968, Syria acceded to the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare; in 1969, it acceded to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; in 1972, Syria signed the Biological Weapons Convention; and in 2013, we acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

It is unfortunate that the OPCW is being exploited as a tool to implement the political agendas of certain Western countries, the best evidence of which is the new approach to decision-making within the policymaking organs of the Organization. That has led to divisions and polarization within the OPCW and caused it to deviate

from its established practice of reaching decisions by consensus, rendering the Organization vulnerable to exploitation on international geopolitical and security issues and diverting it from the objectives for which it was established.

On a number of occasions, Syria, along with other countries, has raised objective observations regarding the work of the OPCW fact-finding teams. Nevertheless, Syria has cooperated with those teams and facilitated their demands in order to allow them to succeed in their work. However, they have failed more than one test by relying on information from open sources, depending on the testimony of parties that support terrorists and failing to uphold the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Syria has detailed the flaws of those teams in the relevant forums.

With regard to Syria's declaration, the persistence of some countries in questioning it is unacceptable. Syria has spared no effort in cooperating with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in order to fully implement our declaration. It is very strange that Western countries should accuse Syria of using chemical weapons while at the same time ignoring the crimes committed by armed terrorist groups and disregarding the well-documented information provided by Syria. That emboldens terrorists to wage more chemical attacks.

As for the statement made by the representative of Israel, it is laughable that she would lecture us about upholding international commitments pursuant to international conventions, while Israel is the only party that acquires enormous arsenals of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction without any international oversight. Israel is the State that continuously perpetrates aggressions against Syrian territories without consideration for international law. I believe that really reflects the true hypocritical face of Israel, its arrogance and its representatives' lack of the slightest degree of credibility. I do not find myself compelled to respond to the allegations levelled against my country by the representative of Israel, which sponsors terrorism in our region.

**Mr. Zlenko** (Ukraine): Russia continues to disseminate fake narratives concerning the alleged development of programmes related to biological weapons in Ukraine. It is very obvious that the so-called Russian evidence that was presented during the consultative meeting of the Biological Weapons Convention is null and void. It has been concocted

as part of the Russian Federation's unjustified and unprovoked full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, one of the components of which is powerful disinformation activity.

The origin of the so-called evidence is highly dubious. Russia is well known for its activities of deceit, sabotage and cover-ups. Ukraine has never, ever developed, produced or stored — alone or together with someone else — biological or chemical weapons. It has never, ever had such intentions. It does not have them now and will not have them in the future.

Ukraine does not possess a relevant infrastructure for biological-weapons development and production in its territory. We do not have biosafety level 4 laboratories for the conduct of research related to biological weapons. The existing public health laboratories in Ukraine operate for the sake of public health and veterinary protection. They diagnose infections and preserve collections of pathogens of infectious diseases. Ukraine's cooperation with the United States and other partners is entirely peaceful and aimed at increasing the capacity of medical and biological facilities in Ukraine to prevent and counteract the outbreak of infectious diseases, as well as to provide aid to the citizens of our country.

**Mr. Vorontsov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to respond to the groundless and provocative information provided by the delegations of the United States and Ukraine in response to the well-founded arguments and evidence presented by the Russian Federation, which point to the fact that articles I and IV of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) are being flouted by the military and biological activities carried out by those countries on Ukrainian territory.

It is very easy to say that these facts are lies and disinformation. Indeed, propagandists love to divert the attention of the international community as a whole from the real threats and problems in the biological sphere. That rationale and all evidence is public information that any United Nations Member State can access on the relevant section of the BWC website, under the consultative meetings tab. It contains all of the documentation gathered by the Russian Federation regarding military biological activities in Ukraine.

It also contains the questions we submitted to the United States and Ukraine — although, as we have already said, those questions have not received proper answers and therefore remain open. They must be

resolved by the United States of America and Ukraine. We hope that the necessary answers are provided, including within the framework of the ninth Review Conference of the BWC, so that all of our well-founded concerns can be allayed and the situation we have on our hands resolved.

It is clear that the aforementioned delegations are not taking a constructive approach to resolving the situation. They have shown no interest in submitting well-argued, specific and detailed answers to the questions we have put to them, despite the fact that they would help us to strengthen the BWC regime and satisfy our concerns in that regard.

**The Chair:** The Committee will now take up the cluster "Conventional weapons".

We have a long list of speakers for this cluster, so I appeal for the full cooperation of all delegations in respecting the time limits, as they did impeccably this morning, which has enabled us to start this cluster.

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

ASEAN aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

In the light of the current situation marked by conflicts and political tensions, ASEAN is gravely concerned by the illicit proliferation of conventional weapons throughout the world, which contributes to more violence and instability, prolongs poverty and undermines human well-being. The use of small arms in conflict situations results in over 200,000 civilian deaths each year. Consequently, it affects not only the livelihood and economy of the local people, but also creates intense pressure on the local Government and surrounding regions.

To preserve peace, stability and sustainable development, ASEAN believes that the effective regulation and control of conventional weapons are needed. ASEAN reiterates that the implementation of relevant international agreements on conventional weapons should be in pursuance of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, with States bearing the primary role. Simultaneously, ASEAN acknowledges that States have the sovereign right to acquire and manage their conventional inventory for self-defence, as well as for safeguarding national security.

ASEAN strongly believes that consistent international action is one of the key steps towards disarmament. ASEAN remains interested in the continued development of various frameworks and international legally binding instruments, including the eighth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. We also look forward to the convening of the twentieth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, to be held in Geneva next month.

ASEAN welcomes the adoption by consensus of the final report of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, which will contribute to enhancing global efforts in regulating the flow of such weapons and combating the illicit trade in all types of weapons at the national, regional and international levels.

To that end, ASEAN has been diligently working to reinforce the disarmament machinery in the region and beyond. We continue to address arms smuggling through the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime and the ASEAN Regional Forum. Moreover, the annual meetings of ASEAN Chiefs of Police enable stronger regional cooperation in transnational crime investigations. At the same time, the ASEAN Forensic Sciences Institute helps to promote the exchange of information on forensic investigations related to illicit arms. Through those mechanisms, ASEAN has been able to work effectively to combat the smuggling of small arms and light weapons, as well as other related transnational crimes, in the region.

ASEAN is pleased with the progress made by the Senior Officials' Meeting of the Central Authorities on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters in its work to ensure the effective implementation of the ASEAN Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, which strengthens Member States' capacity and enhances cooperation to combat transnational crimes.

There is a need to address the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, particularly by non-State actors. ASEAN notes the outcome of the Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional

Weapons (CCW), and that the CCW is tackling potential threats arising from lethal autonomous weapons systems, including their possible acquisition by armed non-State actors. To counter those threats, a robust and future-proof legally binding instrument is needed.

ASEAN reiterates the significance of mine action in national rehabilitation and sustainable development and welcomes efforts to promote mine action at the global level, including at the United Nations. ASEAN commends the role of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre as a centre of excellence in promoting ASEAN's efforts to address the issue of explosive remnants of war for interested ASEAN member States and to raise awareness of the danger of explosive remnants of war among affected communities. ASEAN expresses appreciation to its dialogue partners, external partners and international organizations for contributing to the undertaking of projects and the operationalization of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre.

It is imperative that demining projects be developed with a holistic approach that includes victim support and a strong community development focus in order to save our people, particularly women and children, from the catastrophic impacts of landmines. ASEAN calls upon all States parties, especially developed countries, and the international community to provide the requisite financial, technical, and humanitarian support for the reintegration and rehabilitation of victims.

To conclude, ASEAN would like to reaffirm its steadfast commitment to combating the illicit trade in conventional weapons and calls on States to work together to halt illegal trading activities so as to ensure that we are all safe and that our development efforts can continue without disruption.

**Mr. Sánchez Kiesslich (Mexico)** (*spoke in Spanish*): The challenges associated with conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons continue to require the utmost attention of the United Nations. In addition to the destabilization generated by the irresponsible arms trade and the arms race, various countries have publicized the development of new types of weapons with the potential to perpetuate the arms race. Those new weapons are also being used under false pretences to maintain possession of nuclear weapons.

Mexico reiterates its concern over the increasingly widespread use of small arms and light weapons. Such weapons claim more victims every day and are used in almost half of all violent deaths worldwide.

Approximately 90 per cent of deaths caused by firearms occur outside of conflict-affected areas. They are intrinsically linked to the trafficking in persons and drugs, exacerbate armed conflicts, escalate violence within countries and are the primary inputs of transnational organized crime and terrorism. They are the perfect tool for those who use hate speech and resort to racial or religious supremacism.

The majority of those weapons and ammunition are distributed via illicit channels that benefit from inadequate frameworks and inefficient control mechanisms. We are particularly concerned about cross-border weapons trafficking. We believe that it requires the firm commitment of and cooperation among all countries, from the perspective of shared responsibility and a truly multidimensional approach. That responsibility also necessarily involves industry and the fostering of genuine cooperation with all sectors in the lifecycle of arms and munitions. Similarly, we underscore that the issue of ammunition is part and parcel of that of small arms and light weapons.

The effective control of international transfers of conventional weapons and, specifically, small arms and light arms is a humanitarian imperative and a requirement for sustainable development. Mexico calls on countries to build synergies across the various international instruments. My country will continue to promote transparency and cooperation mechanisms. We will continue to promote broad and expeditious information-sharing among national authorities and support the adoption of best practices.

We reiterate our support for the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and welcome the outcome of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States. We also applaud the success of the eighth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. We must not forget other international and regional instruments that are available to us to urgently reduce the trafficking of weapons and their diversion.

The adoption of Security Council resolution 2616 (2021) was also an important milestone in the efforts of that organ. The resolution includes several provisions with regard to respect for United Nations embargos, in addition to promoting greater cooperation and information-sharing on traffickers and trafficking routes, illicit financial transactions, the activities of intermediaries and the diversion of weapons.

My delegation underscores the humanitarian impact of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, as well as of improvised explosive devices and incendiary weapons. Because of the damage and harm they cause to people and communities, we must develop an international mechanism that can protect civilians and civilian infrastructure from such explosive devices. We thank Ireland for its leadership on the political statement on that issue.

Mexico also reiterates the need for the international community to determine the future path for the development of lethal autonomous weapons systems and the risks posed by weapons that are not subject to substantial human control.

**Ms. Kaminski** (Canada): Conventional arms represent the vast majority of weapons used in armed conflicts. Their proliferation and unlawful use can fuel, intensify and prolong conflict, lead to regional instability, perpetuate crime, terrorism and violent extremism, contribute to violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including gender-based violence, and hinder development. It is critical that we universalize and implement the relevant international laws and norms that we have agreed to and regulate the transfer of those weapons.

Collectively, United Nations Member States are working to prevent conflict and insecurity by better addressing their links to human rights and development. It is important that those efforts reflect a full integration of gender considerations, whether they fall in the spheres of humanitarian, peace and security or development work. History has shown us that policy and programming efforts addressing both the drivers and consequences of armed conflict must be gender responsive in order to achieve robust and lasting outcomes.

Canada is an active member of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We strongly support the advancement of gender and the gender-based violence provisions of the ATT and encourage a comprehensive discussion on those issues. To that end, Canada, through its Weapons Threat Reduction Programme, is providing financial support to the valuable work of the gender and disarmament programme of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for the development and systematic application of gender perspectives in multilateral conventional arms



control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Similarly, Canada is supporting the Control Arms initiative in the development of methodologies and tools to further the objectives of the ATT's gender and gender-based violence action plan, as well as developing guidance on the implementation of the ATT's article 7.4 on violence against children.

At the eighth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, we were glad to announce that Canada will continue funding the ATT sponsorship programme, with a contribution of \$75,000 annually for three years. Furthermore, Canada is pleased to serve for a second two-year term as a member of the Voluntary Trust Fund selection committee.

Lastly, Canada also calls on all ATT States parties to make their reports publicly available, as transparency is a cornerstone of the Treaty. Regarding the worsening financial situation of the Treaty, we can express only our strong concern. We urge all States parties to pay their annual contributions full and on time. Fulfilling that legal obligation is essential to the survival of the ATT.

*(spoke in French)*

This year also marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signature of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which was the culmination of the Ottawa process and many years of civil society engagement. Canada remains firmly committed to advancing the goals and objectives of the Convention towards a world free of landmines. For Canada, mine action is essential to the success of the Sustainable Development Goals, as it underpins peace and stabilization efforts and helps to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid.

Considerable legacy contamination remains, and new contamination continues. We call on all States that have not yet done so to accede to the Convention, with a view to reaching full universalization. As a State party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), we call on all States to accede to the Convention and pursue the goal of a world free of cluster munitions by 2030. The large number of States that are already party to the CCM reflects a growing awareness of the devastating humanitarian impact of those weapons.

As required by international humanitarian law, we must also continue to work to restrict or ban weapons systems that, by their very nature, are either indiscriminate in their strikes or cause superfluous

injury or unnecessary suffering. Such weapons systems have severe, multifaceted and lasting impacts on civilians and their communities. Canada will continue participating in the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. All weapons used in armed conflict must be compliant with international humanitarian law.

**Mr. Hegazy (Egypt):** Egypt aligns itself with the statements to be delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States, the Group of African States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries under this cluster, and wishes to make the following remarks.

Egypt remains fully committed to engaging in any balanced multilateral endeavour that aims to tackle the multiple challenges and threats arising from the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, provided that such an endeavour is consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and does not intend to negatively affect the rights of States to acquire their legitimate defence needs.

We continue to fully support the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPOA) as an essential multilateral instrument that contributes to the eradication of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Egypt has been regularly submitting its national report on the implementation of the UNPOA, including for the year 2022. We also reiterate the importance of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons as a valuable tool in that regard.

We welcome the successful conclusion of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as the consensual adoption of its outcome document. We also look forward to convening the fourth Review Conference of the UNPOA in 2024 to further elaborate on issues related to the diversion of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized recipients and implement the consensual conclusions of the eighth Biennial Meeting. In that vein, we look forward to the quick establishment of the fellowship programme proposed by the Movement of Non-Aligned

Countries to provide training to developing countries on issues related to small arms and light weapons, in line with the recommendations of the eighth Biennial Meeting outcome document.

The Middle East and Africa face severe threats owing to the increasing illicit flows and intentional transfers of small arms and light weapons to terrorists and illegal armed groups with the direct support of a few States that resort to arming terrorists as a tool of their foreign policies, in clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international norms and several Security Council resolutions. That is a phenomenon that requires the immediate attention of and more tangible measures by the United Nations.

Some have argued that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was going to be the solution that would stop all illegal flows of conventional arms. In that regard, we reiterate that the ATT's various shortcomings, especially its lack of clear definitions and criteria, largely undermines its possible effectiveness and makes it possible to abuse the Treaty as a tool to manipulate and monopolize the legitimate trade in conventional weapons in a politicized manner, while ignoring the prevention of the intentional supply of weapons to unauthorized recipients, such as terrorists and illegal armed groups.

We reiterate our call on the States parties to the ATT to ensure that its implementation is consistent with the Charter of the United Nations without any infringement on the rights of States to meet their national security and self-defence needs.

Egypt is one of the States that have suffered the most from the use of landmines, as 20 per cent of the world's landmines were planted in Egyptian soil during the Second World War, and there is a continued need to intensify international cooperation to tackle that major problem, addressing humanitarian and development challenges. Fully aware of the relevant humanitarian considerations, Egypt has imposed a moratorium on the production and export of anti-personnel landmines since the 1980s, long before the conclusion of the relevant conventions, including the Ottawa Convention, which fell short of addressing many key elements associated with the threat of landmines.

**Ms. Hakaoja** (Finland): Finland fully aligns itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union and would like to make the following national remarks.

The events of this year have highlighted the importance of protecting the rules-based international system, as its viability has a direct impact on our collective ability to advance disarmament and non-proliferation and to deliver on our shared commitments. Finland would like to reiterate its continued support to the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament and the New Agenda for Peace.

In conventional arms control, we must persist and continue the determined work to ensure the effective implementation of the disarmament and arms-control instruments that we have jointly created and that we must jointly uphold. We need to continue to address the spread of illicit small arms and light weapons and to minimize the negative impact they have on societies and sustainable development. Finland reaffirms its commitment to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPOA). We also welcome the discussions of the Open-ended Working Group on Ammunition and offer our full support to the work of its Chair and his team.

Regarding the Arms Trade Treaty, promoting national implementation and fulfilling the reporting obligations of the Treaty remain key priorities. The universalization of the Treaty is moving forward, and Finland would like to encourage all States to join the Treaty. We acknowledge the importance of continued international assistance to help countries to develop their capacities and fulfil their commitments. Finland is a regular contributor in that regard. We are pleased to support the work done through the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, as well as the Saving Lives Entity fund.

In our Africa strategy, published in 2021, Finland committed to continuing its support to peace and security in Africa, and that applies also to arms control. We would like to highlight the important work done by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in strengthening weapons and ammunition management in Africa, which Finland continues to support.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is a key disarmament instrument whose integrity and full implementation must be ensured. We need to enhance efforts towards its universalization and ask all States to join the Convention. We also encourage the full implementation of the Oslo Declaration and

Plan of Action. Finland, as a long-standing supporter of humanitarian mine action, continues to provide sustained support to humanitarian mine action projects in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Somalia. Finland welcomes the work done to address the humanitarian harm arising from the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Finland will gladly join the Political Declaration on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and commends the efforts of Ireland and Austria on that topic.

We need to be able to respond to the changing security landscape brought on by new weapons technologies. We highlight the importance of establishing the necessary normative and operational framework for the use of lethal autonomous weapons systems, anchored to full compliance with international humanitarian law. We commend the work done so far under the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, working under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The Group of Governmental Experts is the appropriate forum to continue to engage in those discussions, and we find the 11 guiding principles a good basis for a practical outcome. Finland is fully committed to the work of the Group and encourages all States to engage constructively in those discussions so that we can find ways to move forward.

Last but definitely not least, let me highlight the importance of the women and peace and security agenda, gender equality and the full empowerment of women. We are pleased that the importance of mainstreaming gender is increasingly taken into consideration in the implementation of arms control instruments, but more still needs to be done, and we need to step up our efforts also in the field of conventional arms control.

**Mr. Rydning** (Norway): We are in a time of rearmament. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reports that 2021 broke yet another record for global military spending. Conventional arms and equipment consistently draw the most resources and remain the major cause of casualties and destruction in armed conflict, exacting the heaviest toll on civilians.

We are convinced that improved security and protection for all can be achieved at significantly lower levels of armament. That requires building trust and confidence around commonly agreed norms and rules. Measures to ensure effective export control,

arms control, non-proliferation, disarmament and transparency in armaments have a direct, positive bearing on international peace and security and must be resolutely promoted.

Escalating global tension, not least through Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, threatens the conventional arms control and disarmament architecture. Confidence- and security-building measures and instruments that have served us well for decades are being undermined. We must act to preserve what we have and endeavour to make further progress at a time when established norms are being severely challenged.

Global security affects us all and is a responsibility for all. Civil society, international organizations and academia play a central role. Their participation in all relevant forums must be protected. We must also strive to achieve gender balance and diversity in disarmament forums and integrate those perspectives into our work.

It is of paramount importance to reduce the human suffering linked to the trafficking and diversion of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. These weapons have serious humanitarian impacts and exacerbate conflict and pervasive crime worldwide.

Norway staunchly supports the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). By establishing effective international norms and standards, capacity-building and cooperation, the ATT counteracts the illicit trade in and diversion of a wide range of arms. With 111 State parties, the Treaty has real potential to prevent armed violence, but more is needed. We call on more of our fellow Member States to join the Treaty as a matter of priority.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions are cornerstones of the humanitarian disarmament architecture. Firmly based on principles of international humanitarian law, they have established clear norms against the use and stockpiling of these indiscriminate weapons. These Conventions have been hugely successful, and their norms are adhered to by many more than just the States parties. The way States' mine-action operators and organizations work hand in hand to implement these Conventions sets them apart. Yet classic munitions and anti-personnel mines, including those of an improvised nature, continue to pose a dire threat to affected communities.

Reported new use is of grave concern. We urge our fellow States parties to maintain a high level of funding for mine action, and we urge States that are not party to these Conventions to join them without delay.

Repeated annual reports of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict show that civilians account for almost 90 per cent of recorded casualties when explosive weapons are used in populated areas. Russia's brutal attacks on civilians in Ukraine are a stark reminder of this. Norway supports the proposed political declaration on explosive weapons in populated areas, which commits us to reviewing and improving the way we conduct our military operations and to making significant efforts to strengthen the protection of civilians. We look forward to the high-level conference in Dublin in November where States are invited to endorse this declaration.

With the promise of speed, efficiency and accuracy exceeding human abilities, autonomous functionality is making its way into modern life, including weapons. Autonomy has significant potential. At the same time, it raises serious legal, ethical and military concerns. It challenges our conceptions of control and responsibility. We must ensure that weapons systems featuring autonomy remain under meaningful human

control. We have a window of opportunity to address these challenges by clarifying and elaborating adequate norms and rules before the technology fully matures.

The work on lethal autonomous weapon systems under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) has considerably developed our collective understanding of this complex domain. Yet for two consecutive years, it has not been impossible to translate the growing convergence into agreed conclusions. The complexity and risks of the matter require us to make progress. We expect this imperative to translate into action at the coming CCW Meeting of the High Contracting Parties.

**The Chair:** We have heard the last speaker for today's meeting. The next meeting will be held tomorrow, Tuesday, 20 October at 10 a.m. in Conference Room 4, where we will first hear briefings by the Chair of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and by the Chair of Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Thereafter we will continue the discussion under the cluster "Conventional weapons".

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*