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First Committee

2nd meeting

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New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Pieris(Sri Lanka)

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

Introductory statements

The Chair: I would like to warmly welcome all delegations to this meeting, particularly those joining us for the first time from capitals and other United Nations duty stations. Also, I would like to acknowledge the presence today of the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu.

At the outset, let me warmly commend Ambassador Omar Hilale of Morocco for the skilful and effective manner in which he conducted the proceedings of the First Committee at its seventy-sixth session. I should also like to pay tribute to the other members of the previous Bureau for all their hard work in ensuring the success of the session.

This year, we begin the work of the First Committee in its traditional modalities after holding its substantive session in abridged mode for the past two years. As the Committee returns to normalcy and proceeds with its full-fledged programme of work in this conference room, I feel both excitement and growing anticipation, which I trust many representatives share with me.

Since its inception, the United Nations has been devoted to the cause of disarmament, which is what former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, speaking at a press conference on 19 May 1955, once called the Organization's "hardy perennial". That is a simple reflection of the utmost importance of disarmament to humankind. However, 58 years later,

efforts are still under way at the United Nations to address several global challenges relating to nuclear weapons, specifically nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear terrorism and the physical security of nuclear materials.

Secretary-General Hammarskjöld believed that the lack of mutual trust between adversaries was one of the greatest obstacles to disarmament and that improvements in transparency could address that issue. That is something that we should take serious note of. The lack of confidence among States in that respect has hitherto been one of the major causes of fear, suspicion and international tension. The General Assembly, and perhaps this Committee, might wish to consider the value of endorsing the principle of openness of information in the armament field as one that could contribute significantly to reducing international tension and promoting progress towards disarmament.

We all know the inscription of the famous line from the book of Isaiah, in the Bible, on the wall of the Ralph Bunche Park in front of United Nations Headquarters, just across the street. It says:

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Millenniums later, we are confronted by a stark reality. War and violence continue to ravage people's lives, not only those of soldiers but also those of civilians. Our civilizations face the risk of extinction by our own reckless behaviour, particularly by the use of weapons

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of mass destruction and the accelerating degradation of the environment. It appears to me that our eternal desire for peace drifts further away from fulfilment. Seventy-seven years ago, the United Nations and the General Assembly were created to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”, yet war continues to bring untold misery to humankind.

I wish to underscore the importance of this Committee contributing to the core of the disarmament machinery, which provides significance to various problems in the field of disarmament, global security and peace. It is well to remember that in terms of the international legal order, security traditionally is not viewed as a legal principle but is seen, along with peace, as the primary purpose of the Charter of the United Nations. It is said that the prospect of United Nations security action unbound by international law runs like a red thread through the Charter. Members will appreciate that the achievement of peace and security is the *raison d'être* for the United Nations. We must therefore consider elements that could draw out a comprehensive programme of action through a context-specific lens and support such initiatives in order to strike a balance to incorporate a full range of opinions to achieve flexibility and tangible results. It is no secret that there has been a slow pace in reaching intended goals in the First Committee. In that context, I believe that in these sessions we will strive to deliver a set of substantive recommendations to achieve universal peace and security.

Members will appreciate that since the turn of the century, the global security environment has become increasingly complex, dynamic and volatile. Various power dynamics of a geopolitical demographic and a climatic, technological, social and economic nature have been driving that trend, as observed by Secretary-General Guterres. We observe that this has been taken to an entirely new level by the recent outbreak of the coronavirus disease and the convergence of so-called old and new security challenges, such as the return to new power politics, the rise of asymmetric and hybrid warfare and the emergence of novel threats posed by strong non-State actors, technological innovation and a significant increase in economic activity, pandemics and environmental concerns that entail a veritable globalization of the security agenda.

Against that backdrop, which appears to sound so gloomy, I have sought to engage in an adventure of thought in an endeavour to find the reasons for such

inertia in dealing with these issues effectively. I could not resist the temptation of recalling the writings of Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan*, of 1651, and thought it appropriate to share these gems of wisdom that can be a guiding compass in the cerebral intercourse that, I hope, we will engage in the course of this month. He wrote:

“So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First competition; secondly diffidence; thirdly, glory. The first makes men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third for reputation... Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war is of every man, against every man.. and that the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

Rousseau, the great social thinker, comes along and says that societies made humans more selfish, although at our core all of us are generous and love to live in harmony; that we are naturally timid and peaceful but become soldiers due to the coercive pressure of the State. He proposed plans for perpetual peace by the creation of islands of peace. I ask, is that not what we are longing for as trustees of the communities we represent? Is that not part of the intergenerational trust that we have pledged to keep — to keep our planet, our only home, safe? I believe that these words of wisdom offer us a strong, intelligible rationale for engaging in the deliberations of the Committee with a view to achieving that peace. I therefore urge that we give primacy of place to our innate capacity to reason as members of the supreme order of creation. Members will appreciate that the reason to emerge and develop was the antagonism between people, hostility and conflict.

The contemporary security challenges are dauntingly complicated. Threats and challenges come from multiple sources simultaneously: State belligerency and militarism, outer space politics, climate change, transnational crimes and cyber and nuclear warfare, to name a few. It is shocking to note that Governments have spent a total of \$2 trillion annually as they re-evaluate security threats and increase their defence budgets. That creates competition in military spending, which leads to an escalation of the arms race and in turn undermines international security. It must therefore be appreciated that at this critical juncture, the First Committee has the crucial responsibility of promoting cooperation in the maintenance of

international peace and security, particularly in the area of disarmament.

Despite the shifting international environment, rife with wars and arms races, the First Committee has led efforts towards disarmament and arms control throughout the history of the United Nations. It will be recalled that, in January 1946, the First Committee considered and approved the text of the first resolution of the General Assembly (resolution 1/I), which created a commission to deal with the problem raised by the discovery of atomic energy. Thus, the United Nations established the goal of eliminating from national armaments atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.

I believe that the post-pandemic environment is conducive to reflecting on conflict, disarmament and governance in a more fundamental way to build back better. I say that the contemporary times present us with a unique opportunity to reconsider our posturing to disarmament, world peace and security by ensuring that human dignity is placed at the centre of all policies, as well as how to engage in political transitions and a sustainable future for all. I believe that in the light of the new advances in technology and science and in the consideration of matters of disarmament, global peace and security, we must endeavour to structure a kind of future that will reduce the scope for disagreements; for competition, diffidence and glory, as I said earlier; in other words, eliminate our greed for unreasonable gain, dispel from our minds the morbid fear for our safety, and rid ourselves of our reputation as successful aggressors.

Let us therefore move to structure the kind of future we want to shape for humankind as a whole as being our primary responsibility in this century and beyond, firmly entrenched in the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. May I wish every delegation a fruitful engagement in the matters of the First Committee, at the end of which we can, I hope, walk away from these deliberations in the knowledge that we have made meaningful advances in making the world a safer place where we can all live in peace, safety and dignity.

As representatives to the First Committee and of the Members of the United Nations, we all, each and every one of us, must strive to fulfil our special responsibilities and seize this unique opportunity to promote cooperation in disarmament and further the cause of international peace and security. I am confident that if we apply the simple principle of the best interests

of humankind, we will and we can find the answers to a peaceful world. Let us today pledge to accept that challenge. I wish everyone exciting, intellectual and rewarding deliberations in the days to come.

I now have the pleasure of inviting the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, to make a statement.

Mrs. Nakamitsu (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): At the outset, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Pieris on his appointment as Chair.

I would also like to express gratitude to Ambassador Illyassov of Kazakhstan for his able stewardship of much of the First Committee preparations, along with the other members of the Bureau.

I should, of course, like to take a moment to thank Ambassador Hilale of Morocco for his able steering of the seventy-sixth session of the Committee.

A year ago, when I addressed the Committee (see A/C.1/76/PV.2), I reflected on a security landscape defined by a number of factors. I spoke of heightened tensions among nuclear-weapon States, an ongoing global health crisis, threats emanating from new technologies with potentially destabilizing effects, and other strategic risks, including those related to cyberspace and autonomous weapons systems. Not only does my assessment remain largely unchanged, but the severity of those multidimensional and multidirectional challenges has increased. The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in February and the continuing war are exacerbating those broader challenges to an unprecedented level.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate the position of the Secretary-General that any annexation of a State's territory by another State resulting from the threat or use of force is a violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We must step back from the brink. We must work together to end this devastating and senseless war and uphold the United Nations Charter and international law.

We are witnessing a multiplication of conflicts with dire civilian impacts, alongside nuclear-sabre rattling and threats to nuclear safety. As the Secretary-General has repeatedly warned, the use of nuclear weapons is now unacceptably within the realm of possibility. The prospect of active hostilities in domains such as outer

space and cyberspace is becoming increasingly likely. Norms against the use of chemical weapons that were once iron-clad have been shaken. Rapid advances in weaponry, including the integration of higher levels of autonomy, are challenging the governance structures we have in place. What is more, divisions among States are deepening as rhetoric becomes more inflammatory and consensus agreements further afield.

The war in Ukraine has brought the existential dangers posed by nuclear weapons back into the global spotlight. I urgently appeal to all nuclear-weapon-possessing States to commit to no-first use of any nuclear weapon as an immediate measure to help save humankind from potential extinction. These dangers are only the most recent manifestation of troubling trends that have been brewing for some time: increased reliance on those weapons, lack of transparency and dialogue, vast amounts of money spent on their qualitative improvement, allegations of expanding arsenals and veiled threats to use them.

The inability of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to reach consensus was a lost opportunity to reverse some of these trends. The Review Conference grappled with a number of pressing issues, not least the safety and security of nuclear power plants in conflict zones. Let me reiterate the Secretary-General's concern that the danger posed by the occupation of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant is unprecedented. Any damage to that facility could spell catastrophe.

The NPT draft outcome was far from perfect. Progress on nuclear disarmament was minimal. Yet it still contained useful elements, especially those related to the validity of all previous disarmament commitments, increased transparency and accountability, and steps to reduce nuclear risk. Just because the Conference did not adopt the draft does not mean that States cannot implement the commitments made in its text. I urge all States to implement those commitments voluntarily and restore momentum as we enter a new review cycle already next year.

It is not all bad news when it comes to efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. I am encouraged by the growth in the number of States that have signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. I hope that momentum continues.

At the regional level, the successful outcomes of the first and second sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction provide further reason for optimism. I am hopeful that the upcoming third session of the conference will achieve further progress.

Of course, I also warmly welcome the successful conclusion of the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and its adoption of a declaration and action plan.

Of course, our focus must not be limited to nuclear weapons. The norm against the use of chemical weapons continues to be undermined by the failure of the international community to hold accountable those who would dare to use those inhumane weapons, including in the Syrian Arab Republic. States must support the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in its efforts to uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In the area of biological weapons, States have an opportunity to reinforce the Biological Weapons Convention at its forthcoming ninth Review Conference. The ninth Review Conference will be the first opportunity we have had since the coronavirus disease pandemic to strengthen the Convention and its support structures. I urge States parties to actively reinvigorate the Convention to ensure its central role in preventing the misuse of biology for hostile purposes.

In May, I had the pleasure of addressing the open consultations on the comprehensive review on the status of implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). That resolution remains an important non-proliferation tool and has functioned as an excellent example of international cooperation towards a shared goal. I trust that the conclusion of the comprehensive review will support a strengthening of the implementation of the resolution.

We continue to see the increasing and expanding transfer and use of ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as uncrewed aerial vehicles, to carry out long-range strikes, often with capabilities that blur the line between battlefield and strategic weapons. I call for regionally inclusive dialogue at the expert level, in the light of the risks those developments pose to stability and to the protection of civilians.

I acknowledge the many proposals and convergences for the prohibition and regulation of lethal autonomous weapons systems in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. At the same time, I also share the frustration with the slow pace of progress and the inability of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems to capture the full extent of these convergences in an agreed document. It remains critical for States to accelerate and extend their efforts to narrow differences and agree on a pathway leading to an effective international instrument. My hope is that through engagement with all relevant actors, we can ensure the responsible innovation and development of artificial intelligence in order to reap the benefits, while mitigating the risks.

Encouragingly, while threats to peace and security emanating from outer space and cyberspace remain serious, they are subject to focused discussions in respective intergovernmental processes.

For outer space, I commend the new work that has been initiated this year on the elaboration of norms, rules and principles, and believe this should be a step towards new hard and soft law governing that domain. Preserving outer space as a realm free of conflict and weaponization remains an urgent priority. That is why the Secretary-General intends to convene a multi-stakeholder dialogue on outer space as part of the Summit of the Future. The joint panel discussion of the First and Fourth Committees on 27 October will be an important opportunity for States to express their views on the outcome of the Summit.

Ensuring the peace and security of cyberspace is equally urgent. This year, the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies agreed to its first annual progress report by consensus. The Working Group has recommended several action-oriented next steps, including the establishment of a directory of points of contact and focused discussions next year on topics such as public-private partnerships. I am confident that this constructive work will continue next year to ensure that cyberspace does not become a domain of further tension and escalation.

Other scientific developments — such as quantum technologies, biotech applications, human enhancement and novel materials and manufacturing — could potentially pose risks to international peace and security. States are encouraged to identify multilateral

venues to further unpack those issues, including synergies across these technologies, and to consider gaps in governance.

The effective regulation of conventional weapons must not be overlooked as a key component of the international security puzzle. Several collective efforts in the area of conventional weapons control are encouraging, from the consensus outcome document agreed at 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, to the outcomes of the eighth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty and the ongoing work of the Open-ended Working Group on conventional ammunition. The latter presents an important opportunity to tackle the dual challenges of poorly managed ammunition: unplanned explosion and diversion.

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which should remain an important global transparency and confidence-building mechanism. I welcome the recommendations agreed by the 2022 Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation and relevance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development, including the establishment of an informal Group of Friends. I call on States to join us in efforts to reinvigorate the Register.

My Office is undertaking various efforts to support the meaningful regulation of conventional weapons, including small arms. In partnership with the African Union (AU), we are supporting Africa Amnesty Month as part of the AU flagship Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2030 initiative. The operationalization of the Saving Lives Entity trust facility is progressing. Programmes are ongoing in Cameroon, Jamaica and South Sudan to support comprehensive and sustainable responses to the scourge of illicit small arms and light weapons, and quick-impact projects through partnerships with civil society are continuing under the trust fund of the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation.

Also critical to those efforts is partnership with regional and subregional organizations. To that end, the regional centres of the Office for Disarmament Affairs are supporting tailored approaches to enhancing regional and subregional security through disarmament

and the regulation of arms. A bright spot in 2022 was the conclusion of negotiations on a political declaration addressing the humanitarian impact arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. I congratulate Ireland on its leadership of that initiative and look forward to the adoption conference in Dublin next month.

The disarmament machinery remains plagued by the continued stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, although it is encouraging that subsidiary bodies were convened this year. The inability to adopt a substantive report for transmittal to the General Assembly was the latest setback in the efforts to revitalize that essential component of the machinery. The 2023 session cannot continue with business as usual. A genuine examination of the *modus operandi* of the Conference is long overdue.

On a more positive note, after a hiatus of three years I am pleased that the Disarmament Commission was able to get back to substantive discussions on its two agenda items. I hope that this positive momentum translates into concrete recommendations next year. Successful disarmament and non-proliferation efforts require inclusive and participatory approaches. I am pleased to report that my Office continues its successful Youth4Disarmament initiative. Youth participation at formal and informal meetings has increased more than 500 per cent since my Office launched the initiative in 2019.

A key means of deepening engagement with youth and other stakeholders is education. Twenty years after the 2002 United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education, disarmament education continues to grow in importance and relevance. To strengthen our reach and impact in that area, my Office is developing a comprehensive strategy to guide our work and reinforce our partnerships with policymakers, academic institutions and other stakeholders.

Meaningful inclusivity requires the full, effective and equal participation of women. This year, the First Committee will discuss a draft resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Unfortunately, the fundamental call of the text for the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men in disarmament processes and decision-making remains elusive. As a starting point, I would encourage States to continue to strive for gender parity in their delegations.

The First Committee, the General Assembly's Disarmament and International Security Committee, must remain a vital component of the international peace and security architecture. Tangible solutions must be sought here. This is true in the calmest of times, but even more so as the international community faces serious challenges to peace and security across numerous fronts. It is high time we intensified our commitment to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, which are all instruments for security and represent the only true pathway towards a sustainable peace. It is also high time we worked together to review our existing approaches to disarmament and joined forces to craft a new vision for the future.

Last year, the Secretary-General released his report *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) calling for a new agenda for peace, which would also provide an opportunity to update our vision for disarmament so as to guarantee human, national and collective security. Work to elaborate this new vision is under way. My Office and United Nations partners will continue to engage with States and other stakeholders in bringing this vision to fruition. I wish the First Committee a productive session.

The Chair: I thank High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Nakamitsu for her statement.

Before I open the floor for statements in the general debate, I would like to remind delegations that I count on their cooperation to limit statements to 8 minutes when speaking in their national capacity and 12 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations for this session. To assist speakers in that regard, and with their understanding, we will use a timing mechanism, by which the red light on the speaker's microphone will begin to blink when a speaker reaches the time limit for her or his statement. As necessary, I will remind speakers to conclude their statements in our collective interest.

As mentioned during our organizational meeting on Thursday (see A/C.1/77/PV.1), I encourage representatives who have longer statements to deliver a summarized version and to provide their full statement to be posted on the eStatements web portal. At the same time, I would strongly encourage speakers to speak at a reasonable speed to allow adequate interpretation.

Agenda items 90 to 108

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Koba (Indonesia): I am pleased to see you in the chair this morning, Sir. I would like to congratulate you and other Bureau members on your election, and assure you of NAM's full cooperation.

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). NAM reiterates its continued concern over the current difficult and complex situation in the field of disarmament and international security. In that regard, the Movement calls for renewed efforts to resolve the current impasse in achieving nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects.

NAM also expresses concern at the increasing global military expenditure, which could otherwise be spent on development needs, including the eradication of poverty and the elimination of diseases affecting humankind, including the coronavirus disease pandemic.

NAM reaffirms its principled positions on nuclear disarmament, which remains the agreed highest priority for the United Nations in the area of disarmament, in accordance with the final document of the first special session devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2). NAM is deeply concerned by this dismal state of affairs, as a result of non-compliance by the nuclear-weapon States and the threats it poses to the non-proliferation regime and international architecture of security.

The Non-Aligned Movement further reiterates with concern that qualitative and quantitative improvements in existing nuclear weapons contravene the negative security assurances provided by the nuclear-weapon States.

NAM reiterates that the convening of the United Nations High-level International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, as mandated by relevant General Assembly resolutions, would provide an important opportunity to review progress made in nuclear disarmament and to further promote that noble objective.

NAM welcomes multilateral efforts towards nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons. NAM welcomes the convening of the substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament

Commission in 2022 and underscores its full support for the Commission's work to advance global disarmament and non-proliferation.

Moreover, NAM takes note of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 22 January 2021 and the convening of its first Meeting of States Parties from 21 to 23 June, which adopted a declaration and an action plan. It is hoped that the Treaty will contribute to furthering the agreed global objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

NAM States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) express their disappointment over the consecutive failures of the ninth and tenth Review Conferences of the States Parties to the NPT to adopt a consensual outcome document, despite the constructive engagements of NAM States parties. NAM States parties to the NPT reiterate their readiness to engage in future discussions and negotiations in a constructive, transparent and inclusive manner, involving all States parties, to achieve consensus.

NAM State parties to the NPT also call for the full implementation of all commitments and unequivocal undertakings assumed by the nuclear-weapon States at the 1995 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences, and reiterate the urgent need for the commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to their disarmament obligations under the NPT.

NAM stresses the importance of enhancing public awareness about the threat posed to humankind by nuclear weapons. NAM also welcomes the United Nations annual meetings and activities for the observance of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

NAM takes note of the extension of the New START Treaty to 2026. NAM calls for the renewal of the commitments agreed within the framework of said Treaty.

NAM believes that the nuclear-weapon-free zones established by relevant treaties are positive steps and important measures towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. NAM calls upon all nuclear-weapon States to ratify related protocols to all treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

NAM State parties to the NPT re-emphasize the special responsibility of sponsor States of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East in implementation of that

resolution and are concerned at the persistent lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution.

NAM welcomes the convening of the first and second sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons, pursuant to decision 73/546, and looks forward to the third session of the Conference. NAM States parties to the NPT stress that the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT remains valid until the objective is achieved and that the implementation of decision 73/546 is without prejudice to the validity of the aforesaid resolution and decisions and shall not also be construed as their replacement.

NAM is of the firm belief that non-proliferation policies should not undermine the inalienable right of States to acquire, have access to, import or export nuclear material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes. NAM also stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), especially by all nuclear-weapon States, which, *inter alia*, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. NAM expresses concern at the decision of the United States to not seek ratification of the CTBT, as announced in its 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, taking into account the special responsibility of nuclear-weapon States for the realization of the entry into force of the CTBT.

NAM States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) note with satisfaction the effective operation of the CWC. They urge United States, as the only remaining State party not to have done so, to take every necessary measure to ensure its compliance with the detailed plan for the destruction of chemical weapons.

NAM States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention call for the resumption of multilateral negotiations to conclude a non-discriminatory legally binding protocol dealing with all articles of the Convention.

In the context of the Security Council's resolution 1540 (2004) and its subsequent resolutions, NAM stresses that the issue of the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors should be addressed in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner by the General Assembly, taking into account the views of all Member States. NAM reaffirms the need to prevent the emergence of new types of weapons

of mass destruction and welcomes the adoption of resolution 75/3, entitled "Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons: report of the Conference on Disarmament".

NAM continues to affirm the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and relevant parts, components and ammunition for their self-defence and security needs. NAM emphasizes that no undue restriction should be placed on the transfer of such arms.

NAM remains deeply concerned over a wide range of consequences arising from the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons. NAM calls on all States, in particular major producing States, to ensure that the supply of such weapons is restricted to Governments or entities duly authorized by them.

NAM takes note of the successful convening of the eighth Biennial Meeting of the 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 outcome document. NAM welcomes its decision to establish a standing dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons.

NAM remains concerned over the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the threat of the weaponization of outer space. The abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty brought new challenges to international peace and stability and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

NAM re-emphasizes the urgent need for the commencement of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament, *inter alia*, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

NAM continues to reaffirm the need for a universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory multilateral approach towards the issue of missiles in all its aspects, negotiated multilaterally within the United Nations.

NAM welcomes the conclusion of the Open-ended Working Group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, established by resolution 73/27. Taking into account the divergent substantial views of all member States, NAM also welcomes the consensual

adoption of its outcome document. NAM also takes note of the conclusions of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, in its 2013, 2015 and 2021 reports.

NAM reiterates its determination for the success of the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies established by resolution 75/240, and further notes the process of adoption of the Group's first annual progress report by consensus.

Enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations disarmament machinery is a shared objective. Expressing its deep concern over the continued lack of adequate representation of NAM countries in the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, NAM requests the Secretary-General and the High Representative to undertake steps to ensure proper, balanced and equitable representation in the Office.

NAM reaffirms the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. NAM stands ready to engage constructively on the advancement of issues on the United Nations disarmament agenda and the ways and means of strengthening the disarmament machinery, and underscores the importance of convening the fourth special session on disarmament.

Mr. Smith (Bahamas): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on all disarmament and international security agenda items.

CARICOM congratulates you, Sir, and the members of the Bureau on your election. You have the support of our delegations, and we wish you and the Bureau every success. We also express our gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Omar Hilale of Morocco, for ably leading our work during the seventy-sixth session.

CARICOM reiterates its belief that the world is at the most critical juncture since the Second World War. One year since our last session, our outlook has grown even more pessimistic. We are confronted by increasingly diminishing prospects for sustainable peace and security around the world. We fully agree with Secretary-General Guterres' assessment at the opening of the high-level debate on 20 September. He stated:

“Our world is in big trouble. Divides are growing deeper. Inequalities are growing wider. Challenges are spreading farther.” (A/77/PV.4, p.1)

The Secretary-General further stated that “We need hope, and more, we need action” (*ibid.*) CARICOM relies on the rule of law to guarantee our right to a secure and peaceful existence. We therefore continue to urge all States to act consistently within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations on all disarmament and international security matters.

Illegal arms and ammunition are sourced from outside our region. The damage done to the human community, institutions and resources done by gun violence is an immediate and profound threat to the security and stability of the States members of CARICOM. The use of firearms — in particular, high-powered weapons — accounts for most homicides in our region. This violence is antithetical to CARICOM's ambitions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The consequences are devastating for citizens and law enforcement officials.

The CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security is working to strengthen regional peace and security through the implementation of the Caribbean Firearms Roadmap. The Roadmap is to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in firearms in all its aspects. Among other initiatives, measures include assistance to CARICOM members in making and enacting our respective firearms national action plans in partnership with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC); conducting a comprehensive, evidence-based study of illicit arms trafficking to and within the Caribbean and the socioeconomic costs of this trafficking — the study is expected to be finalized by December 2022; and the establishment of a Crime Gun Intelligence Unit.

We have joined efforts as a region to confront these problems. However, cooperation at the multilateral level is an absolute requirement. CARICOM reiterates its commitment to the Arms Trade Treaty, a critical framework in addressing the network of the illicit arms trade. CARICOM continues to place high priority on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit

Small Arms and Light Weapons. The full and effective implementation of the Tracing Instrument remains a key component in the reduction of armed violence. We therefore welcomed the fact that a consensus outcome document emerged from the eighth Biennial Meeting of States, held earlier this year.

CARICOM attaches great importance to the operationalization of the Roadmap for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030. It is our belief that the Roadmap will contribute to the attainment of Agenda 2030, and in particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.4, which addresses the reduction of illicit financial and arms flows by 2030. We express our profound appreciation and gratitude to our international partners for the assistance provided in pursuit of that necessary endeavour.

For all of digital technology's proven benefits, we must acknowledge that it empowers criminal networks to work across jurisdictions. Such activities are — yes — a security threat to our region, but further, these networks compromise and frustrate national strategies for socioeconomic development. Resilience-building in the region is important. The CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security therefore includes initiatives in collaboration with international partners, among other things, aimed at a regional cybercrime policy and legislative guidance document, as consistent with the objectives of the CARICOM cybersecurity and cybercrime strategy.

We commit to the production of harmonizing policy and legislation among member States.

CARICOM is deeply concerned about the modernization and acceleration of nuclear and other arsenals. We were encouraged earlier this year by a joint statement of the leaders of five nuclear-weapon States. They affirmed that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”. Yet, a few months later we are dismayed by both explicit and implicit threats that have increased the likelihood of the use of nuclear weapons. In that regard, CARICOM fully supports the Secretary-General's view that nuclear weapons offer no security — just carnage and chaos. The elimination of nuclear weapons would be the greatest gift we could bestow on future generations.

As part of a region that established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, pursuant to the Treaty of Tlateloco,

CARICOM was pleased to join the international community in welcoming the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 22 January 2021. Our support for the TPNW is grounded in the firm belief that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons would be a gross violation of the Charter of the United Nations, a crime against humanity and a violation of international humanitarian law. Additionally, CARICOM welcomed the convening of the first Meeting of States Parties of the TPNW, which took place in Vienna earlier this year, and which saw the adoption of the Vienna Action Plan and Declaration of the First Meeting of States Parties.

As a region, it gives us great satisfaction and pride to note that two CARICOM member States, Barbados and Haiti, count among the most recent signatories of the TPNW, while Grenada joined the list of States parties in June. CARICOM continues to encourage all member States to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, as it is a vital and progressive step towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

It is widely acknowledged that the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the foundation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Yet, it is regrettable that there still exists an absence of trust and good faith in negotiations on nuclear disarmament. It is indeed regrettable that the international community was unable to agree on a consensus outcome document at the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to NPT. We also continue to reiterate our encouragement to nuclear-weapon States to implement, sooner rather than later, their nuclear disarmament commitments under article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

CARICOM expresses its disappointment that 26 years after the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty opened for signature, it still has not entered into force. To that end, we continue to urge ratification by the remaining annex 2 countries to enable its entry into force.

The promotion of gender equality and gender equity, and the full and meaningful participation of young people in all decision-making processes on matters related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control remain a priority for us in CARICOM. In that context, Trinidad and Tobago, with the support of CARICOM, will again table a draft resolution entitled “Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control” during this session of the Committee.

CARICOM welcomes and values the support of all member States for that forward-looking text.

CARICOM acknowledges with gratitude, the important work done by UNLIREC with member States of the region. We also continue to underscore our appreciation for the technical support provided by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

In closing, we recognize the vital and insightful role that civil society continues to play in the field of disarmament and international security. We acknowledge their unique perspective and contribution. We undertake to continue our collaboration with civil society to make progress in disarmament and international peace and security.

Mr. Chindawongse (Thailand): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We warmly congratulate you, Sir, and the members of the Bureau on your election. We express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for their leadership in advancing the United Nations disarmament agenda.

Amidst challenges that the world is facing on multiple fronts, especially in terms of ensuring a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the coronavirus disease, the global peace and security architecture has continued to be under pressure from heightened tensions among major Powers, the modernization of nuclear arsenals, an accelerating arms race and ongoing conflict in different parts of the world. ASEAN remains fully committed to strengthened multilateralism and enhanced international cooperation as the most efficient means to achieve global peace and security.

ASEAN reiterates its support for international efforts towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. ASEAN remains concerned about the dire consequences of any use of nuclear weapons on people's health, socioeconomic livelihood, environment and sustainable development. We firmly believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to guarantee against their use and threat of use.

ASEAN reaffirms its collective position against nuclear tests and continues to stress the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without delay. All ASEAN member States have ratified the CTBT, and we join others in urging the remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible so that the Treaty's entry into force may finally be realized.

ASEAN reaffirms its recognition of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. While welcoming the convening of the tenth NPT Review Conference, ASEAN regrets that it concluded without a consensus outcome document that could have provided much-needed additional momentum towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. ASEAN continues to call on all States parties to the NPT to renew their commitments to the full and effective implementation of the Treaty, particularly article VI.

ASEAN calls on all nuclear weapon States parties to the NPT to fulfil all of their nuclear disarmament obligations and emphasizes the need for them to adhere to accountability through benchmarks — concrete, measurable, timebound actions on nuclear disarmament with established deadlines — and to report their implementation of their obligations until the goal of total elimination is achieved in a structured manner that allows non-nuclear weapon States to engage constructively on their reports.

ASEAN reaffirms the inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, in particular for their economic and social development. In that regard, the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy concentrates its efforts to enhance cooperation among the nuclear regulatory bodies and further strengthen nuclear safety, security and safeguards in the region. At the same time, ASEAN will continue to strengthen its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We are also pleased with the progress of the implementation of the 2019 Practical Arrangements between ASEAN and the IAEA on Cooperation in the Areas of Nuclear Science and Technology and Applications, Nuclear Safety, Security and Safeguards.

ASEAN reaffirms our commitment to preserving South-East Asia as a zone free of nuclear weapons and

all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty). We stress the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, which has been extended for another five-year period, 2023-2027. We reaffirm our commitment to continuously engaging the nuclear-weapon States and intensifying the ongoing efforts of all parties to resolve all outstanding issues, in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Bangkok Treaty.

In addition to the NPT, the CTBT and nuclear-weapon-free zones, including the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, ASEAN reiterates that the Treaty of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which held its first Meeting of State Parties in June 2022, is a historic agreement that contributes towards global nuclear disarmament and complements other existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments.

ASEAN maintains its unequivocal commitment to upholding the norms against the existence and use of chemical, biological and radiological weapons. We strongly support the central role of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and welcome the progress made in eliminating chemical weapons stockpiles since the entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997.

ASEAN also notes the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and reaffirms our commitment to that landmark Treaty. We recognize the necessity of multilateral negotiations and note the lack of a verification measure, the latter of which poses a challenge to the effectiveness of the Convention. We also place great importance on enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchanges in toxins, biological agents, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes. ASEAN welcomes the successful conduct of the ASEAN Regional Forum Tabletop Exercise on Response Capabilities to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Incidents, held in Manila from 13 to 15 June. We also would like to highlight the achievements of the Network of ASEAN Chemical, Biological and Radiological Defence Experts to foster greater regional cooperation in that domain.

ASEAN reiterates that access to outer space is an inalienable right of all States and that the use of outer space should exclusively be for peaceful purposes only and for the collective benefit of humankind. In that regard, ASEAN reaffirms that the prevention of an arms race in outer space and its weaponization is of vital importance. We underscore the need for shared understanding and the acceptance of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours developed through multilateral engagement and negotiation, and urge all Member States to respect and ensure the full implementation of all related United Nations instruments and relevant General Assembly resolutions. It is in that context that ASEAN welcomes the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group pursuant to resolution 76/231. ASEAN has submitted a working paper and delivered joint statements during the first two sessions of the Working Group.

ASEAN recognizes the legitimate right and authority of sovereign nations to use conventional weapons to maintain internal security and to defend territorial integrity, while underlining the need to address the growing illicit proliferation of conventional weapons, which hampers economic and social progress and threatens peace and security. In that regard, ASEAN welcomes the consensus adoption of the final report of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

ASEAN is pleased with the role of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC), which serves as a centre of excellence in promoting ASEAN's effort to address the issue of explosive remnants of war and raise awareness of the danger of such remnants among affected communities. We appreciate ASEAN's dialogue partners, external partners and international organizations in contributing to undertaking of projects and operationalization of the ARMAC.

ASEAN reaffirms its commitment in building an open, safe, secure, stable, accessible, interoperable, peaceful and resilient cyberspace. We welcome the adoption by consensus of the annual progress report during the third substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021-2025. ASEAN will continue to render full support and cooperation to Ambassador Burhan Gafoor of

Singapore in his capacity as Chair of the Open-ended Working Group.

In the region, we have updated the ASEAN Cybersecurity Cooperation Strategy 2021-2025 and established the ASEAN Regional Computer Emergency Response Team, which helps strengthen the region's cybersecurity incident response and preparedness. ASEAN also recognizes the role of cybersecurity awareness activities and capacity building programmes of the ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence, in Singapore, and the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre, in Bangkok, in complementing existing ASEAN efforts in building regional cybersecurity posture.

With the current dynamics in the international security environment, ASEAN stresses further the need to preserve and strengthen the United Nations disarmament machinery and other related multilateral and bilateral mechanisms, including the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We look forward to engaging constructively with those mechanisms to advance the global disarmament agenda.

In line with the foregoing, ASEAN supports the full and effective implementation of other relevant efforts, including Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament to advance nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in a concrete, holistic and integrated manner. In that regard, we welcome the fruitful discussion at the Security Council 1540 (2004) workshop for ASEAN States on 21 and 22 September, in Bangkok, which helped strengthen a regional network among the 1540 Points of Contact on the implementation of the resolution.

In closing, ASEAN will make every effort to contribute constructively to the important work of the First Committee towards our common goal of achieving a more secure, stable and prosperous world.

Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the eight States members of the Central American Integration System (SICA): Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and my country, the Dominican Republic.

We wish to congratulate you, Ambassador Mohan Pieris, and all the members of the Bureau on your election. You can count on the support of the

SICA member States for the successful conclusion of this session.

We, the member countries of SICA, parties to the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security, which this year commemorates its twenty-sixth anniversary of implementation, wish to reiterate our conviction that international peace and security will be achieved through respect for and adherence to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, and above all by refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. At the same time, we wish to reiterate our long-standing commitment to general and complete disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, which we consider of great relevance to the maintenance of international peace, security and stability.

Recognizing the continuing threat of illicit markets in conventional arms, their parts, ammunition and components, their misuse and excessive and destabilizing accumulation as a manifestation of transnational organized crime, as well as the implications of the lack of controls on the arms trade in different regions of the world, the States members of SICA will continue to focus on the prevention of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, incorporating into our respective national legislation the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

We reiterate that international assistance and cooperation are indispensable conditions for the successful implementation of the Programme of Action and of our national legislations in that ambit. In that regard, the States members of SICA welcome the final document adopted by consensus at the eighth Biennial Meeting of States on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, which was held in New York from 27 June to 1 July.

We are proud to be part of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), an instrument that established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in

a densely populated area globally. For this reason too, we welcome the two sessions of the Conference for the Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East and look forward to its third session.

For the SICA member countries, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of global efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, to encourage the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to promote the objective of nuclear disarmament. We regret and note with concern that the tenth NPT Review Conference concluded without reaching the consensus necessary to adopt a final document that would allow progress in the implementation of the Treaty, despite the valuable participation of the majority of the States parties and the efforts made by the chairmanship.

We urge the nuclear-weapon States to comply with their unequivocal obligations to eliminate their nuclear arsenals, in accordance with article VI of the NPT and the commitments derived from its Review Conferences. We reaffirm that the NPT does not establish any right to indefinite possession of nuclear weapons by any State, as the Treaty establishes a transitional status.

We welcome the successful holding of the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, held from 21 to 23 June, and we further welcome its conclusions: the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action. We will work constructively and proactively at its next Meeting of States Parties.

We also welcome the recent ratifications of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by two of our member States, the Republic of Guatemala, on 13 June, and my country, the Dominican Republic, on 22 September 22. It is worth noting that with those ratifications, Central America is the first subregion of the world to adhere to that important instrument, which makes us proud and reaffirms our historic position of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, in favour of the maintenance of international peace and security. We reaffirm our strong condemnation of any kind of nuclear test anywhere and by anyone and urge all States to refrain from undertaking any kind of nuclear weapon test.

We reiterate the importance of and the need for an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The SICA member countries underline their firm conviction that the complete elimination of chemical and biological weapons is a priority in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The member countries of SICA are concerned about the constant increase in conventional arms transfers since 2000, and consequently about excessive military spending, which reached a record \$2.1 trillion in 2021. In that regard, we call for the resources used in favour of an arms race to be allocated to strengthen our work towards achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve a more just, peaceful and stable world.

The issue of anti-personnel mines continues to demand the attention of the international community. SICA stresses the importance of cooperation in mine clearance and victim assistance, and hopes that the successes achieved in recent years will continue.

SICA supports all international efforts to reduce the suffering caused by cluster munitions and their use against the civilian population, in clear violation of international humanitarian law.

We favour the strengthening of international norms applicable to States in the field of information and telecommunications technology (ICT) in the context of international security, promoting actions and strategies to strengthen cybersecurity and prevent crime and cyberattacks, and taking into account that an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment is essential for all.

In that regard, we note with satisfaction the work of the three substantive sessions of the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021-2025, and the adoption by consensus of the document "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security" (see A/77/275), which contains the first progress report of the Working Group's discussions.

We recognize the value of the Disarmament Commission as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and its role as a deliberative body. In that context, we welcome the convening of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission from 4 to 21 April, after three years of inactivity. We hope that its work will continue with consistency and that it will be

able to fulfil its mandate to submit recommendations to the General Assembly.

SICA urges all members of the Conference on Disarmament to demonstrate their political will to ensure the commencement of its substantive work without further delay.

Lastly, we highlight the important work carried out by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the assistance it provides to countries of the region in implementing disarmament measures in various areas. At the same time, we commend all the efforts undertaken by different disarmament agencies of the United Nations system to that same end.

Mr. Hermann (Denmark): It is an honour to address the Committee on the behalf of the Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Denmark.

This year, the global and European security environment has changed dramatically. The Russian Federation has invaded a neighbour, a sovereign country, Ukraine. Over the course of the past seven months, the Russian Federation has used a wide range of conventional weapons, often in a manner contrary to its obligations under international humanitarian law. It has engaged in dangerous and completely unacceptable nuclear rhetoric and has repeatedly threatened the use of nuclear weapons.

Let me be clear — the Nordic countries condemn in the strongest possible terms the unprovoked and unjustifiable aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The invasion constitutes a grave violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. It severely undermines European and global security and stability. We strongly condemn the illegal referendums and the subsequent illegal annexation by Russia of Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions. The Russian aggression also violates the security guarantees given to Ukraine in the Budapest Memorandum. That was a guarantee linked to Ukraine renouncing nuclear weapons on its territory and joining the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapons State.

The Nordic countries condemn all breaches of international humanitarian law. It is our firm belief that

Russia must be held accountable for its human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. We equally condemn Belarus for its role in the Russian aggression.

The arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and bilateral and multilateral cooperation have been severely affected by this behaviour. We deeply regret that Russia alone chose to block a consensus final document of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in August. The Nordic countries were strongly engaged in seeking a successful outcome of the Conference by engaging in initiatives such as the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, the Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership and the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. We were encouraged by the level of common ground achieved on several divisive issues and the strong commitment to the Treaty demonstrated by the States parties. We are looking forward to the next review cycle and will seek to further strengthen the NPT. The NPT remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, with the ultimate goal of a world free from nuclear weapons and an important element for future peaceful use and development of nuclear energy.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is an integral part of the nuclear disarmament architecture. We strongly urge States outside the treaty, in particular the remaining annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the treaty, guaranteeing a legally binding ban on nuclear testing. We urge all States to abide by a moratorium on nuclear test explosions and any other nuclear explosions.

We also reaffirm our support for early negotiation and conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Pending a future FMCT in force, we urge all States that have not yet done so to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on their production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The Nordic countries pledge their full and continued support for the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The IAEA is crucial in underpinning the implementation of the NPT through its safeguards system. It is our view that a comprehensive safeguards agreement with an additional protocol is the international verification standard,

The Nordic countries continue to fully support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. We are increasingly concerned about Iran's continued breaches of its nuclear-related commitments. We urge Iran to return to full compliance with the agreement and to address outstanding safeguards issues without delay. We call on Iran to return to negotiations in Vienna without further delay.

The unlawful launches of ballistic missiles of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea this year threaten international and regional peace and security. The Security Council should address this appropriately. The Nordic countries are deeply concerned that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues the development of its nuclear weapons programme, that it is prepared to engage in first use of nuclear weapons and that it rules out negotiations on abiding by its obligations. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its nuclear and ballistic programmes and recommit to meaningful negotiations. The complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in accordance with Security Council resolutions is the only way to sustainable peace and security on the Korean peninsula. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea cannot obtain the status of a nuclear-weapon State in accordance with the NPT.

The re-emergence of chemical weapons is an urgent threat to international peace and security. It is serious and deeply disturbing and must be dealt with firmly and collectively. The erosion of norms against the use of weapons of mass destruction has affected the Chemical Weapons Convention. Any use of chemical weapons under any circumstances is a clear breach of international law and the Chemical Weapons Convention, and can amount to the most serious crimes of international concern, including war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Impunity for breaches of the global prohibition of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated. Holding those responsible to account will be facilitated by the ability of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to identify perpetrators of such heinous crimes. We underline our full and unequivocal confidence in the objectivity, impartiality, independence and technical expertise of the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is a vital pillar of the disarmament regime. With a view to the upcoming review conference this year and the global pandemic, it is timely to recommit to that important treaty and constructively attend to its implementation. The Nordic countries strongly supports the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, which is the only independent international instrument for investigating alleged use of biological weapons.

Weapons of mass destruction tends to dominate the disarmament dialogue and for valid reasons. However, there are other important disarmament and arms control issues on the agenda in the Committee.

The Nordic countries are committed to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. The strong and ambitious Oslo action plan of 2019 and the road map need to be implemented with firm determination in order to achieve a mine-free world by 2025. We urge other participating States to join us in that effort and hope that more States will sign up to that successful treaty, which contributes so much to the humanitarian cause.

We call on all United Nations Member States to join the Arms Trade Treaty. The major arms exporters, importers and transit countries carry special responsibilities in that regard. Transparency and information-sharing are of utmost importance in reducing the risk of diversion. In order to achieve effective treaty implementation, it is essential to pay attention to the risks of serious acts of gender-based violence.

The illicit flows of small arms and light weapons constitute a key challenge to international peace, security and development. The Nordic countries support instruments addressing that important issue, including The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects and the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament.

The Nordic countries appreciates the substantive work over the past years of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. We consider the Conference on Certain Conventional Weapons the best-suited forum to discuss issues regarding emerging technologies in this area. It will be important to advance work on applicable principles

and norms, especially in order to ensure meaningful human control and accountability for decisions over the use of force in the coming years. We are committed to pursuing an outcome that reinforces the necessity of compliance with international law, in particular international humanitarian law.

The Nordic countries are firmly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We regard outer space as a common good for the benefit of all. Strengthened multilateral cooperation is needed to preserve and enhance the safety, security and sustainability in outer space activities. To that end, we welcome and support the work of the Open-ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. We welcome commitments by States not to conduct destructive direct ascent anti-satellite missile tests.

A globally accessible, free, open and secure cyberspace is now, more than ever, fundamental to how the world operates. The Nordic countries are committed to promoting the full application of existing international law in cyberspace. We welcome efforts to support the practical implementation of the United Nations framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace by establishing a programme of action.

The Nordic countries welcome the conclusion of the process on strengthening the protection of civilians from the humanitarian consequences arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The declaration is a positive outcome at a time when the international security environment is under extreme pressure.

Last but not least, let me turn to an issue that ought to come effortlessly and should be mainstreamed into our work, procedures and substance, and that is gender. Gender aspects across the board and the empowerment of and full inclusion of women into our substantive work should be the order of the day.

The Nordic countries will make every effort to contribute constructively to the important work of the First Committee and beyond.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chair, on your election to preside over the First Committee at the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly. We also extend our sincere congratulations to the other members of your Bureau. As we affirm our confidence in your ability to make the work of the

Committee a success, we express the full support of the Group of Arab States to you for chairing this session, which is being held under exceptional and unprecedented circumstances. The Arab Group also aligns itself with the statement of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Arab Group reaffirms its principled positions regarding disarmament and international security. It stresses that peace, security and stability cannot be maintained throughout the world in the presence of nuclear weapons. That makes it necessary to save humankind from those weapons and to harness the enormous material and human capabilities allocated to it for development.

The Arab Group affirms that the multilateral framework, under the umbrella of the United Nations, and the goals, principles and commitments agreed upon in accordance with the Charter provide the only sustainable way to address the issues of disarmament and international security, which have become increasingly and extremely important in the light of current international developments, including a dangerous escalation and increasing possibilities of the use of nuclear weapons.

The Arab Group reiterates its deep concern over the continued failure to achieve tangible progress in the field of nuclear disarmament and the implementation of agreed commitments in the area of disarmament, as well as the failure to achieve the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), whereby the nuclear-weapon States clearly disavow any specific timeframe for the implementation of those international commitments for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Arab Group reaffirms the prominent role of agreements establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in achieving international peace and security and advancing nuclear disarmament efforts throughout the world, and the Middle East region in particular. The Group reaffirms that Israel's continued refusal to join the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and to subject its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency represents a serious threat to regional and international peace and security, as well as a violation and defiance of dozens of relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991).

In the light of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the adoption of the decision of the 1995 NPT Review

and Extension Conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, the Arab Group reiterates its grave concern over the continued procrastination by some concerned parties in the implementation of that decision. The Arab Group recalls that the decision to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East was and remains an integral part of the agreement to indefinitely extend the Treaty, reached at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

In that context, the Arab countries stress the need to take immediate executive steps to establish that zone. At this session, the Arab Group will again submit a draft Arab resolution entitled “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East”. We look forward to the continued support for the draft resolution of all Member States, foremost among which are those calling for peace and keen to uphold the principles and objectives of the United Nations without double standards. The Arab Group reiterates its support for resolution 72/24, entitled “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East”.

In that context, the Arab Group welcomed the convening of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and All Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East, which was held by the United Nations in November 2019 under the chairmanship of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, pursuant to decision 73/546. The session was successful and achieved positive results with the adoption of a number of important substantive and procedural decisions, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/75/63. The Arab Group also welcomed the convening of the second session under the presidency of the sisterly State of Kuwait, which succeeded in adopting the Conference’s rules of procedure, and the establishment of an informal working committee to carry out intersessional consultations between the official sessions of the Conference, in addition to the adoption of a final report. The Arab Group looks forward to holding the third session of the Conference in November under the auspices of the sisterly Republic of Lebanon. The Arab Group urges all parties invited to the Conference to participate in good faith with the aim of negotiating a legally binding treaty in that regard, which would contribute to strengthening peace and security at the regional and international levels.

The Arab Group expresses its appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/64) on the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and All Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East, in which the Secretary-General welcomes the positive steps taken by the parties participating in the second session and affirms that the Conference process provides a valuable opportunity and useful framework for the countries of the region to engage in serious dialogue, instil reassurance and build confidence with regard to the establishment of the zone. He also praises the constructive, transparent and comprehensive approach adopted by the successive chairs and the countries participating in the Conference, while continuing to call on all parties in the region to take part. He calls on the international community to support the Conference and confirms his commitment to implementing the mandate entrusted to him in decision 73/546 of 2018.

The Arab Group calls once again for the implementation of commitments related to the realization of the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It also stresses the need to respect the balance among the three pillars of the Treaty and to correct the growing imbalance resulting from the deliberate focus by some on non-proliferation at the expense of nuclear disarmament. The Group also stresses the need to activate the pillar of cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy and to support the rights of non-nuclear countries to fully exercise their inalienable right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy so long as they comply with their obligations in accordance with their comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The convening of this session coincides with the fifty-second anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the twenty-seventh anniversary of its indefinite extension, which should prompt us all to work on taking practical measures to ensure its continued validity, move forward with the implementation of its commitments and reap the results.

From that perspective, the Arab Group regrets the failure of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, for the second time in a row — at the ninth in 2015 and the tenth in 2022 — to adopt a final document. That casts a negative pall over the disarmament and non-proliferation

regime at the international level. The Arab Group calls for efforts to ensure the success of the eleventh Review Conference by reaching a comprehensive and balanced final document that includes clear measures to enhance the credibility and sustainability of the Treaty through the implementation of agreed commitments, especially with regard to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, the achievement of the universality of the Treaty and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

I will end here due to the time constraint, but my full statement will be made available on the relevant website.

The Chair: I take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Bahr Aluloom for his contribution to the Committee in his capacity as its former Chair.

Mr. Muhammad Bande (Nigeria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at the seventy-seventh session. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. I assure you of the African Group's support and cooperation.

The African Group aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and wishes to make the following remarks.

This general debate takes place at a time when the disarmament and non-proliferation regime is eroding. International security continues to deteriorate as the world faces immense challenges to peace and security. In that regard, the African Group underscores the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy to address disarmament, non-proliferation and international security, in accordance with the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the first special session on disarmament. The Group restates that there are no substitutes for a constructive multilateral approach to addressing global disarmament issues.

Nuclear weapons represent a grave existential threat to humankind, and if nuclear-weapon States continue to possess and modernize these weapons of mass destruction, our collective security cannot be assured. The Group therefore welcomes and underscores the importance of resolution 70/34 as an integral part of the multilateral disarmament effort. It is therefore

time to continue to raise our voices against the slow pace and the lack of good faith and commitment on the part of nuclear-weapon States to dismantle their nuclear weapons.

The African Group is deeply disappointed at yet another failed Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which could not agree to any tangible progress on the implementation of agreed commitments. Having one failed Review Conference is bad enough. Having two failed review conferences back-to-back plunges the NPT into uncharted waters and places the credibility and sustainability of the Treaty in deep trouble, placing our collective peace and security in jeopardy.

The African Group reaffirms the central role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the consolidation of the NPT, as well as in their contributions to addressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation across all regions of the world. In that context, the African Group remains committed to the Treaty of Pelindaba, reaffirming the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and providing a shield for African territory. In addition, it prohibits both the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and the testing of those weapons on the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

The African Group reiterates its deep concern regarding the lack of implementation of the commitments and obligations of the 1995 NPT Review Conference resolution regarding the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

In the same vein, the Group recalls the convening of the United Nations Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, pursuant to decision 73/546. We welcome the convening of the first session under the presidency of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the second session under the presidency of the State of Kuwait. The African Group calls on all invited parties to constructively continue to engage in good faith in order to negotiate a legally binding treaty that satisfies the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

The African Group underscores the importance of continued respect for the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy and stresses the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in continuing to

ensure the commitment of States to the implementation of safeguards agreements and in the provision and promotion of technical support and cooperation, as well as maximizing the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development.

The African Group emphasizes the humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons at this session, particularly the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use or detonation of nuclear weapons, either by accident or as a deliberate action. The Group notes the strides made by States and continues to call on all States, especially nuclear-weapon States, to take into consideration the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of those weapons on human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among others, as well as to take necessary measures and steps to ensure the dismantling and renunciation of those weapons.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. In that context, the Group reiterates the urgent need for our planet to be free of nuclear weapons, as their presence constitutes a grave threat to international peace and security and an existential threat to humankind. Africa supports the objective of complete nuclear disarmament as the utmost prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. It is in that spirit that the African Group recalls the historical entry into force of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 22 January 2021.

The Group reaffirms its full support for the adoption of the declaration of the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, entitled “Our commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons”, which reaffirmed the determination to realize the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The Group also reaffirms its support for the Vienna Action Plan adopted at the first Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty, held in Vienna from 21 to 23 June, to facilitate effective and timely implementation of the TPNW and its objectives and goals. In that regard, the Group wishes to urge all members of the international community, especially nuclear-weapon States and those under the so-called nuclear umbrella, to seize the opportunity to sign and ratify the Treaty at an early date and to pursue the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The continued existence and possession of nuclear weapons do not guarantee security; they are

an affirmation of the risks of their potential use. Our world, including outer space, must be free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It is in that context that the Group stresses the need for the nuclear-weapon States to cease their further modernization, upgrading, refurbishment or extending the lives of their nuclear weapons and related facilities.

The African Group wishes to reiterate the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), taking into account the special responsibilities of nuclear-weapon States. The Group believes that the CTBT offers hope of halting the further modernization and development or vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament. The Group calls on the international community to renew its support for promoting the entry into force of the CTBT. The Group calls on all States, particularly the remaining eight States listed in annex 2, that have yet to ratify the CTBT to do so, taking into consideration the special responsibility of nuclear-weapon States, as stipulated in action 10 of the 2010 Action Plan.

The African Group re-emphasizes the urgent need for the commencement of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament, inter alia, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The African Group underscores the great importance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). The Group welcomes the convening of the 2022 session of the UNDC, held in April under the chairmanship of South Africa.

The African Group remains deeply concerned over the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of small arms and light weapons, and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, particularly on the continent of Africa. The Group remains committed to 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, and welcomes the successful outcome of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States, held from 27 June to 1 July in New York.

The African Group acknowledges the efforts of States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty since its entry into force, as well as the eighth Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty, held from 22 to 26 August in Geneva. The Group urges States parties to the Treaty

to implement it in a balanced and objective manner that protects the interests of all States and not just the major international arms producing and exporting States. The Group reaffirms the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms, their parts and components for their security needs, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The Group welcomes the undertaking by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa to deepen its partnership with the African Union Commission and African subregional organizations within the context of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. The Centre needs assistance in furthering and delivering its mandate, and the Group wishes to seize this opportunity to call for further assistance to bolster its efforts and ensure that the Centre continues with this momentum to deliver on its mandate.

The African Group welcomes the progress made in the context of the Open-ended-Working-Group on security of and in the use of information communication technologies 2021-2025. The Group also recalls the third substantive session of the Open-ended-Working-Group, concluded on 29 July, and welcomes the adoption by consensus of the first annual progress report, which has been issued in the annex of document A/77/275, dated 8 August 2022.

The Group stresses the importance of the prevention of an arms race in outer space through a legally binding instrument that would complement the international legal framework.

The full text of this statement will be circulated through the eStatements portal.

Ms. Jenkins (United States of America): On behalf of the United States delegation, I congratulate you, Sir, on Sri Lanka's election as Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-seventh session. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and commit to working with each of them towards a successful session.

There is no sense in mincing words. We meet this month under extraordinary circumstances. The rules-based international order that is at the core of the Charter of the United Nations is under attack. The structures we created to maintain security and stability are under attack.

There are many contributing factors, including the strain on the international machinery that has been undeniably exacerbated by the Russian Federation. Whether through its illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the forceful seizing control of peaceful Ukrainian nuclear facilities, its reckless nuclear sabre-rattling and rampant disinformation on chemical and biological weapons use, or by singlehandedly blocking consensus on the final document of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Moscow has acted without regard for international law, the principle of sovereign equality or the risks posed by weapons of mass destruction. Moscow again flouted international law in an attempted land grab last week, holding sham referendums in Ukraine at the barrel of Russian guns.

The Charter of the United Nations is clear that any annexation of a State or territory by another state resulting from the threat or use of force is a violation of the principles of the Charter and international law. The United States does not and will never recognize the legitimacy or outcome of these sham referendums, and will never recognize any territory Russia attempts to seize or allegedly annex as anything other than part of Ukraine. It is clear that Russia has deliberately chosen the path of war and destruction, in contravention of its stated intentions.

We have also witnessed the People's Republic of China's continued rapid nuclear-weapons build-up and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ongoing nuclear and missile development.

On 3 January, the People's Republic of China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States affirmed the principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. The United States stands by that principle. We will continue to seek bilateral and multilateral diplomatic approaches to avoid military conflict, strengthen strategic stability, increase mutual understanding and confidence and prevent an arms race that would benefit none and endanger all. That is what will guide our work here at the First Committee.

On 18 April, in response to the clear and pressing threats to space security and sustainability, Vice-President Harris announced a United States commitment not to conduct destructive, direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests. Such tests are dangerous, undermine international peace and security, jeopardize

the long-term sustainability of outer space, increase risk to astronauts, and imperil the exploration and use of outer space by all nations. Responsible nations do not engage in such behaviour.

In order to encourage restraint and develop a norm against such tests, the United States will submit a draft resolution calling upon all countries to commit not to conduct such missile tests. The draft resolution is an important step towards reducing the risk to international peace and security created by that type of testing, keeping the province of all humankind free from the dangerous space debris that such tests generate and preserving all countries' ability to operate in and benefit from outer space. We ask for members' support.

The United States will also continue to support the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a basis for our common security and shared interest in preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons and averting nuclear war. Some might see the lack of a consensus final document at the tenth NPT Review Conference as a sign of failure. We do not share that view. Every State party present — nearly 150 of them — was prepared to endorse the final document save one country: Russia. That was not a failure of the Treaty or even its political process; it was the action of one State. The fact that so many parties rallied around the NPT is remarkable and a sign that, despite our differences, there remains more that unites us than divides us.

The United States will continue to emphasize the need for strategic stability, seek to avoid costly arms races and facilitate risk reduction and arms control arrangements wherever possible, while maintaining a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent and strong and credible extended deterrent commitments.

We will also continue to strongly support the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, while supporting disarmament initiatives like the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament, which we are glad are returning to in-person engagements. We will use our chairmanship of the permanent five process to ensure a nuclear risk reduction dialogue among nuclear-weapon States, not in spite of that difficult security environment but because of it. There is also urgent work to be done to reduce nuclear risks at a time when communication between nuclear-weapon States is more important than ever.

We will also continue to curtail the threats posed by anti-personnel landmines. In June of this year, we announced important changes to the United States anti-personnel landmine policy. Those changes align our policy outside of the context of the Korean peninsula with the key provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. They reflect the Biden-Harris Administration's belief in the need to reduce the use of anti-personnel landmines worldwide, and complement long-standing United States leadership in the clearance of landmines and explosive remnants of war. The policy also stands in stark contrast with Russia's actions in Ukraine, which have littered that country with landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices. The United States is supporting Ukraine's humanitarian demining efforts and will provide more than \$90 million over the coming year to accelerate Ukraine's recovery of unexploded ordnance.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Unfortunately, the threat and use of chemical weapons remains a grave concern to the global community. The United States, like many other nations, condemns Syria and Russia and repudiates their attempts to sow disinformation and obfuscate their actions. Additionally, we must work to ensure that the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) can effectively address present and future challenges. We also cannot allow meaningful progress in the work of the BWC and other conferences and challenges we face today to elude us yet again.

The United States looks forward to working with you, Mr. Chair, and with all nations interested in reducing strategic risks and enhancing global security. We know our future depends on it.

Ms. Oehri (Liechtenstein): We gather at a time of enormous turmoil and tension around the globe. The illegal flow of weapons into conflict areas continues unabated, including in open violation of Security Council arms embargoes or decisions by the General Assembly. Nuclear threats are at an alarming new high, and nuclear and other illegal missile tests remain an unacceptable reality, despite a robust international legal framework on disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been essential in preventing nuclear

proliferation for over five decades, but the lack of its implementation, especially of article VI, constitutes a serious risk to the Treaty's normative strength and, ultimately, to a world free of nuclear weapons. Liechtenstein deeply regrets that the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT in August did not result in an outcome that advances the goals of the NPT and agrees on necessary steps for implementation. Especially in the light of the alarming situation at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant — which, according to Director General Grossi of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), is becoming increasingly precarious — an unwavering commitment on the part of all sides to preventing a nuclear catastrophe is urgently needed. Liechtenstein fully supports the work of the IAEA to assist Ukraine in ensuring nuclear safety and security.

In the absence of progress on the implementation of the NPT, nuclear Powers have continued to modernize and enhance their capabilities, ostensibly in the name of deterrence. But the Russian aggression committed against Ukraine has demonstrated another kind of deterrence — one aimed at preventing Ukraine, a State that gave up its nuclear capabilities with the promise of Russian protection, from defending its own territorial integrity. In that respect, Liechtenstein condemns any and all nuclear threats, whether they be explicit or implicit and irrespective of the circumstances. Russia has instead brought home in stark terms that the risk of the use of nuclear weapons is indeed real, and reminds us that so long as they exist, such weapons will never make the world a safer place. That understanding is the animating force behind the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which strengthens the NPT framework in defining new and concrete perspectives for nuclear disarmament. We hope that more States will join the Treaty, especially those that can contribute directly to a world free of nuclear weapons.

According to Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, the use of force is strictly prohibited unless authorized by the Security Council or used in legitimate self-defence. Illegal war, such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine, must be prevented at all times and perpetrators held to account. At the same time, States have the right to self-defence if an armed attack occurs against them, and they should be supported, including with the means to do so whenever necessary. Russia's recent attempt to annex yet more Ukrainian territory

is a continuation of its aggression, and self-defence therefore continues to apply in this case.

Liechtenstein welcomes the First Committee's consideration of cybersecurity. Militarized cyberattacks against critical infrastructure — including telecommunications networks, power grids, health programmes, as well as political and judicial systems — undermine democratic norms and expose State institutions and their populations to great risk. The United Nations Charter's cornerstone prohibition of the use of force must be enforced everywhere, including when conducted in cyberspace. Despite a common understanding that international law, in particular the United Nations Charter, fully applies to cyberspace, activities by States and other actors to move the domain of warfare to cyberspace have met with little consequence.

Liechtenstein, together with like-minded States parties to the Rome Statute, has explored the role the International Criminal Court may play in the regulation of warfare as it evolves in the twenty-first century by creating the Council of Advisers on the Application of the Rome Statute to Cyberwarfare. We were pleased to have published the Council of Advisers' report last year during International Law Week. The report is aimed at helping develop a clearer understanding of how the Rome Statute, and therefore international criminal law more generally, apply to cyberwarfare, which is more pertinent than ever in the light of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

At this time of great uncertainty over issues of disarmament, the Committee must work closely with the United Nations other organs responsible for peace and security. Liechtenstein is pleased that the General Assembly was able to convene as a result of the veto initiative in response to the double veto by China and the Russian Federation in May over illegal missile testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea — a draft resolution (S/2022/431) that was mandated by previous Council products. We also continue to hope for the Security Council to finally adopt a product in relation to the devastating situation in Myanmar that would call on Member States to prevent the flow of arms into Myanmar and to de-escalate violence, as the General Assembly did in a resolution (resolution 76/180) after the military coup last year.

Only through effective and inclusive multilateralism will we find our way back to conflict prevention,

disarmament and a decrease in military expenditure, which is conducive not only to international peace and security, but also to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals more broadly. All military spending has an opportunity cost, for example for pandemic prevention or climate change mitigation, which are highly alarming human security threats of our times. Militarization also negatively impacts gender equality, including by limiting women's and girls' access to education and economic opportunities. For a peaceful, just, inclusive and sustainable world, we must invest wisely and join forces.

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

Mr. Skoog (European Union): I congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the chairmanship of this very important Committee.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Georgia, Andorra, Monaco and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

In 2022, the paradigms of both the global and the European security architecture changed drastically. The Russian Federation has invaded the sovereign country of Ukraine. It is using wide a range of conventional weapons, as well as cyberattacks, often in a manner that does not comply with international humanitarian law, and is using dangerous nuclear rhetoric and reckless repeated threats to use nuclear weapons. As the Special Representative of the EU Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, emphasized in his statement of 24 February:

“These are among the darkest hours for Europe since the World War II... This is not only the greatest violation of international law, but it is also a violation of the basic principles of human coexistence. It is costing many lives with unknown consequences ahead of us”.

I would add that those consequences have global implications.

The EU reiterates its strongest condemnation of the unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The Russian Federation, a permanent member of the Security Council, is grossly violating international

law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and severely undermining European and global security and stability. We strongly condemn the illegal referendums, which are gross violations of Ukrainian sovereignty and the United Nations Charter, and which took place under military coercion. The results of such actions are null and void and will not be recognized by the EU and its Member States. We firmly reject and unequivocally condemn the illegal annexation by Russia of Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions. We call on all States and international organizations to unequivocally reject their illegal annexation.

We deplore deliberate escalatory steps by Russia, including the partial mobilization of reservists. Moreover, Russia, as a nuclear-weapon State, has violated the security guarantees of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which Ukraine received after renouncing the nuclear weapons on its territory in the wake of the demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and of joining the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon State. Russia has systemically breached the rules of international humanitarian law, causing superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering, especially among the civilian population. Holding Russia accountable for its violations of human rights and international humanitarian law is key to fighting against impunity. We also condemn Belarus for its involvement in the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The European Union's reaction to this brutal act of violence was therefore immediate, proportional, strong and united in political, diplomatic and economic terms. In the face of this affront to humanity, we recall the binding character of the United Nations Charter in its entirety and stress the universality of the United Nations founding principles. We reaffirm our conviction that the major challenges of our time cannot be addressed by countries acting alone, but must be tackled together through effective multilateralism and rules-based international cooperation. In achieving that, we need to work in partnership with others, including civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has also heavily impacted the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, and hampered both multilateral and bilateral cooperation and work in this field.

The long-awaited tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which took place in August, was not able to adopt a final outcome document due to Russia's blocking consensus. The EU, which was strongly engaged in preparations for the Conference, as well as throughout the Review Conference, deeply regrets that no consensus was achieved. Nevertheless, the legally binding obligations enshrined in the NPT and commitments from the past Review Conferences remain valid. We are looking forward to the next review cycle. It will offer yet another urgent opportunity to achieve the progress that is needed to strengthen the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, in accordance with article VI of the NPT, and an important element in the development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes, in accordance with article IV of the NPT.

The EU reaffirms its resolute commitment to and continued support for the full and effective implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). We are increasingly concerned at Iran's continued actions inconsistent with the JCPOA and with severe — and in the case of research and development activities, irreversible — proliferation implications. Some of these actions do not have any plausible civilian justification. The EU strongly urges Iran to return without delay to full JCPOA implementation, including all transparency measures. The EU supports the intensive diplomatic efforts within the JCPOA Joint Commission and the contacts of the EU High Representative, as JCPOA Coordinator, with all relevant partners to achieve a return to the JCPOA by the United States and the resumption of the full implementation of all JCPOA commitments by the United States and Iran. The EU member States regret that Iran has chosen not to seize the diplomatic opportunity as of yet and call on Iran to accept so that the JCPOA can be fully restored. We wish to underscore that the JCPOA negotiation is separate from Iran's legally binding obligations under the NPT, which are essential to the global non-proliferation regime. We urge Iran to cooperate in full with the IAEA, without any further delay or conditionality, to resolve all pending safeguards issues, in accordance with its legally binding obligations under its NPT Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement.

The unlawful launches of ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea this year

threaten international and regional peace and security and warrant an appropriate response by the Security Council. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's declarations that it will continue to develop its unlawful nuclear and missile capabilities, that it would be prepared to engage in the first use of nuclear weapons and that it will not engage in negotiations aimed at returning to compliance with its obligations under Security Council resolutions are a matter of grave concern, as are reports of continued activity at the Punggye-ri nuclear test site.

The EU urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to engage in meaningful discussions with all relevant parties to build a basis for sustainable peace and security and to take steps aimed at pursuing the complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must abandon its nuclear weapons, any other weapons of mass destruction and its ballistic missiles and related programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. We strongly underline that the actions taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea cannot confer the status of nuclear-weapon State in accordance with the NPT or any special status whatsoever. Until the Democratic People's Republic of Korea complies with its obligations under Security Council resolutions, the EU will continue to implement strict sanctions, and we urge all United Nations Members to fully implement all Security Council sanctions.

Furthermore, promoting universal adherence to and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains a top priority for us. The CTBT has become an effective instrument and we reiterate our full confidence in the Treaty's verification regime, which has demonstrated its ability to provide independent and reliable data that will help to deter non-compliance with the Treaty once it enters into force and to respond to threats to international peace and security. All EU member States have ratified the CTBT and are abiding by its obligations. We urge all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT, to abide by a moratorium on nuclear weapon-test explosions or any other nuclear explosion, and to refrain from any action that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty.

Advancing disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control will be a vital part of the United Nations new agenda for peace. The EU will continue to support the multilateral instruments against chemical and biological weapons in order to uphold the

comprehensive legal prohibitions of those categories of weapons of mass destruction and to ensure there can be no impunity for those who use them. We are firmly committed to contributing to a successful outcome of the ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention and the fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The EU also strongly supports the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, which is the only independent international instrument for investigating the alleged use of biological weapons.

The EU is committed to promoting the full application of existing international law in cyberspace and will work with international partners to prevent conflict and advance cooperation and international peace and security through the normative framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, the implementation of confidence-building measures and support for cyber capacity-building. Regarding the work ahead of us, the EU will prioritize strengthening the existing strategic framework for conflict prevention and stability in cyberspace. In particular, we will work with member States and international partners to advance the proposal of a forthcoming resolution to establish a programme of action to advance responsible State behaviour in cyberspace.

We will also continue to support and strengthen conventional arms control instruments, as well as the multilateral export control regimes. Russia's violation of existing confidence- and security-building measures and conventional arms control commitments has damaged the European security architecture. We will strive to universalize the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the full implementation of the Oslo Action Plan. We also fully support the humanitarian goal of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The EU will further address emerging challenges, including those related to lethal autonomous weapons systems, within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, advocate the responsible military use of new technologies, promote responsible space behaviours and support efforts for the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We also call on all United Nations Member States to join the Arms Trade Treaty and strongly encourage the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

We especially welcome as an important achievement of the international community the conclusion of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, in a process led by Ireland following the launch by Austria at an international conference in Vienna in 2019. The Declaration is aimed at reducing harm and strengthening the protection of civilians in armed conflict. That is a positive sign that the international community can still work together to achieve a tangible outcome despite the extremely challenging international circumstances.

In conclusion, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are important cross-cutting priorities for the EU, and should be so for the rest of the world. We commend the Secretary-General for the continued implementation of the entire women and peace and security agenda and welcome his efforts to promote gender equality and improve women's full, active, equal and meaningful participation and agency, including in leadership positions in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control forums.

Mr. Koba (Indonesia): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the Bureau members upon your election. You may rest assured of our delegation's full support.

Indonesia associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

This year, the First Committee is meeting amidst a deeply worrying situation in international security. Global tension among military Powers is heightened. Political division is widening. Trust among countries is at rock bottom. Diplomatic solutions find no endgame for conflicts. The disarmament machinery, which has suffered from institutional inertia and dysfunction, is affected even more. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is being backed into corner, with the recent failure of its tenth Review Conference to generate any consensus outcome. Such failure marks the lack of proper review of the Treaty's operations for two consecutive cycles. We also regret that the Conference on Disarmament (CD) failed to reflect all the work and substantive discussions that took place this year in its annual report, including the work of its subsidiary bodies.

We are also moving farther away from achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The modernization of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems continues. A handful of States host nuclear weapons and allow their potential use. These practices and policies put humankind closer to the brink of nuclear catastrophe. In addressing those challenges, allow me to underline how we must approach the work of the First Committee.

First, we need to reinvigorate our commitments to disarmament. At this critical juncture, where the global security situation is at stake, we cannot afford any regression. We need to revitalize all disarmament machineries, while also focusing on restoring trust among countries. We must not repeat the failures of the previous NPT Review Conference. We also need to urge the CD to immediately discharge its negotiating mandate.

Furthermore, we call on States to strengthen a rule-based international security through immediate negotiations of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons; a legally binding instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapons States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space; and a balanced treaty to ban the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We also call for the immediate ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the annex 2 States and for the realization of nuclear-weapon-free zones where there are none present. In achieving nuclear disarmament, we should aim for the universalization of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Another pending matter is the establishment of the legally binding protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention, in particular on the verification mechanism.

Secondly, we need to strengthen collective efforts to address emerging challenges. Indonesia shares concerns over the increasing threats to peace and security in outer space. We note various initiatives on this issue, including the Open-ended Working Group on reducing space threats. That initiative should serve as building blocks for the commencement of negotiations on an international legally binding instrument to prevent arms race in outer space.

In the cyber sphere, emerging threats also emanate from the malicious use of information and

communications technology (ICT). We should work towards achieving fruitful and action-oriented progress in the Open-ended Working Group on ICT. We also need to foster the implementation of existing norms on cyberspace while addressing gaps in the existing legal framework. Challenges posed by autonomy in weapons systems also deserve serious attention. We believe that machines should not kill people and therefore reject the automation of killing. We also acknowledge the need to address the severe harm to individuals and communities resulting from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Thirdly, we need to ensure the effectiveness of our efforts. All loopholes that could jeopardize the effective implementation of current disarmament and non-proliferation instruments must be closed. During the most recent NPT Review Conference, States parties to the NPT took note of the issue of naval nuclear propulsion. Indonesia calls for a transparent, inclusive and open dialogue on this issue in relevant forum.

On another note, we also should not lose focus on tackling the illicit trade and use of small arms and light weapons. Action must be geared towards strengthening efforts to curb illegal supply of conventional weapons. Cooperation that garners stronger international cooperation, training and capacity-building must be nurtured.

Disarmament is an imperative need and the most urgent task of humankind. We must work together, in the spirit of multilateralism, in building a safe and peaceful world for humankind. We hope that the discussion and our deliberations in the Committee will be geared to taking collective actions to advance disarmament and strengthen international security.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): As we join other delegations in congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election, we do so with a keen awareness of the onerous responsibility the Committee has to assume, especially at a moment in history when the war against Ukraine, as well as unfolding uncontrolled geostrategic actions, could push our world further away from the collective goals of disarmament and security. I therefore wish you great success in leading us during this session and assure you of my delegation's cooperation.

Ghana associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and

the Group of African States and makes the following additional remarks in its national capacity.

As a peace-loving member State, Ghana's participation in the Committee has always been aimed at ensuring that, together, we make a meaningful effort in addressing egregious threats to international peace and security. We therefore urge all delegations during this session to make genuine efforts to re-energize the United Nations disarmament machinery, address the escalating threats to international security and the attendant rise in global military expenditures, and respond to the despair that several delegations continue to have over the work we do.

The current situation portrays grave inconsistencies between the declarations of some States during pertinent disarmament negotiations and discourse and their track record and eventual actions on the ground. Myopic interests appear to have superseded the knowledge that the ramifications of conflicts and other drivers of insecurity go beyond the borders of the points of origin and the fact that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

Those impediments notwithstanding, Ghana reaffirms its commitment to multilateralism and to upholding the international arms control architecture, disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, which have been painstakingly crafted. We continue to recognize the essential work of the Conference on Disarmament and that of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), and in that regard welcome the convening of the UNDC in April 2022. We also reiterate the importance of existing disarmament treaties and reiterate our call on all Member States to commit and adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the fissile material cut-off treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the applicable nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In respect of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we hold the view that we have no choice but to move past the disappointment of the failure to reach consensus at two consecutive Review Conferences on the implementation of the NPT. We implore all member States to commit to the implementation of the three pillars of the NPT in their

entirety and maintain our call on nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their multilateral legal obligations on nuclear disarmament and to implement their unequivocal undertaking in 2000, further reiterated in 2010, towards the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

Likewise, Ghana believes that the entry into force, on 22 January 2021, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons would contribute to furthering the agreed global objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, as the only legally binding global treaty that outlaw's nuclear weapons and addresses the existing loopholes in international law regarding the development, testing, production, acquisition, possession, stockpiling, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

In respect of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we entreat the remaining eight annex 2 States that hold the entry into force of the Treaty in their hands to accede to it without further delay.

We also reaffirm our longstanding position that non-proliferation policies should not undermine the inalienable right of States to acquire, have access to, import or export nuclear material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes. We stress that the peaceful development of nuclear technology, must be conducted under International Atomic Energy Agency supervision and in full compliance with its safeguards, additional protocols and verification regimes. Meanwhile, the goals of peaceful uses should not be misused for proliferation purposes.

Ghana further reasserts its full support for the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, including its Technical Secretariat. The international community must forge consensus towards the establishment of a verification regime for the Biological Weapons Convention in view of recent global developments, including the coronavirus disease pandemic.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world, including the Treaty of Pelindaba, remains an important mechanism in the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We are therefore encouraged by the convening of the first and second sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in 2019 and 2021, respectively, and urge the continuous engagement of all stakeholders towards the establishment of such a

zone in the Middle East, in line with the 1995 and 2015 outcomes of the NPT Review Conferences.

Ghana considers the diversion, illicit trade and the unauthorized use of small arms and light weapons ammunition as a serious impediment to peace, stability, development and the budding democracy in most parts of Africa. The upsurge in organized crime, terrorism, conflict, communal violence, banditry and violent extremism in the Sahel region and parts of West Africa is fuelled by the availability and the easy access to not just small arms and light weapons but also their ammunition. We reiterate, in that regard, the continued relevance of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects and its International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, and the Arms Trade Treaty in multilateral efforts to prevent the illicit acquisition, proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons.

Accordingly, we welcome the outcome of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States on 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. We believe that its decision to establish a standing dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons would be of great benefit to our region.

Ghana takes note of the progress made in the context of the Open-ended Working-Group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security.

Meanwhile, Ghana remains concerned over the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the threat of weaponization of outer space. Those threats to outer space, which is a common heritage of humankind, require urgent renewed focus on ensuring safety for our common good.

In conclusion, Ghana calls on member States to be mindful of immersing others in an avalanche of proposed resolutions, while their actions give course to doubt about their commitment to international peace. Multilateral negotiating mechanisms must not be taken for granted. In that regard, Ghana considers the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament—focusing on the themes “Disarmament to save humanity”, “Disarmament that saves lives” and “Disarmament for

future generations” — to be an important approach. Indeed, we all have a duty to support ongoing work on multilateral platforms as a sound basis for achieving international peace and security

Ms. Joyini (South Africa): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your appointment as Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-seventh session, and to pledge South Africa's full support and cooperation during this session.

South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of African States and the Non-Aligned Movement.

The world is at a critical juncture for our collective peace and security at a time of nuclear danger not seen since the height of the Cold War. The objective of the first resolution of the General Assembly, adopted in 1946, sought to ensure

“the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction” (*resolution 1 (I), para. 5 (c)*).

That objective remains unachieved nearly eight decades later. As we have said before, the existence of just one nuclear weapon jeopardizes us all.

South Africa was therefore disappointed by the failure of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to reach an outcome. That lack of consensus, marking 12 years of failure, is a stark reminder of the lengths nuclear-weapon States are willing to go to retain their nuclear weapons unchecked and to put their selfish narrow interests ahead of the collective peace and security of the rest of humankind. Nevertheless, we will continue to use our moral courage, born out of our development and acquiring of nuclear weapons, as well as the verifiable and irreversible destruction of those weapons, to push for progress on nuclear disarmament.

The total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction remains one of South Africa's key foreign policy priorities. South Africa considers the entry into force of the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) to be one of the most important developments towards the elimination of nuclear weapons since 1946. We therefore welcome the convening of the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW earlier this year. The TPNW is a necessary and effective measure towards the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to nuclear disarmament. It serves as a

catalyst for much-overdue progress in the disarmament pillar of the NPT and in fulfilling the historic bargain between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States. We encourage all States that have not done so to ratify the Treaty without further delay.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are key to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation efforts, and contribute to enhancing global and regional peace and security. South Africa welcomes the convening of the second session of the United Nations Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, and calls on all invited States to continue to constructively negotiate in good faith towards a legally-binding treaty that satisfies the implementation of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference resolution on the Middle East.

South Africa remains committed to the Treaty of Pelindaba, created with the ambitious aim of enhancing regional peace and security through the prohibition of the possession and stationing of nuclear weapons throughout Africa, and encourages the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology. We urge all those who have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty without further delay.

It is crucial that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) be fully restored for regional and global peace and stability. We remain hopeful that the proximity talks will bear positive results and continue to urge all parties to the JCPOA, to conclude the agreement without further delay.

South Africa remains committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and believes that we all have a collective responsibility to uphold the Convention's international norm against the production, use and stockpiling of chemical weapons. We condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, and find it imperative that States be held accountable for any non-compliance with their CWC obligations.

South Africa continues to support the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons as the only technically competent international authority in the field of chemical weapons. We call on all States parties to redouble their efforts to cultivate a consensus culture in the work of Organization in order to restore an environment of cooperation and mutual agreement,

which is essential for the attainment of the aspirations of the Convention.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) constitutes an important contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security by preventing the threat posed by biological weapons. South Africa also remains committed to strengthening the BWC and its implementation. South Africa welcomes the work already done in the build-up to the ninth BWC Review Conference, which represents an important opportunity to strengthen Convention and its balanced implementation. We share the view that States have the right to participate in the exchange of technology, equipment, materials and scientific information for peaceful purposes, and that States parties in a position to do so should contribute to the further development of scientific knowledge and discoveries in that field.

South Africa also attaches great importance to the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, believing that its legal status should be clear and unambiguous.

South Africa congratulates member States on adopting the 2022 annual report of the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021-2025, and looks forward to reaching common understandings on security of information and communications technology (ICT). It is now time to unite behind the single process, and so we caution against the establishment of an unnecessary, parallel process to the Open-Ended Working Group, which has proven to be capable of finding common ground in the complex ICT landscape.

The disarmament machinery stands as a central means to achieve global security. It is therefore essential for the disarmament machinery components to be able to fulfil their respective mandates. While we remain concerned that the Conference on Disarmament is unable to engage in substantive work, we welcome the fact that the United Nations Disarmament Commission was able to resume its consideration of matters related to outer space and nuclear disarmament under the chairship of South Africa's Ambassador Xolisa Mabhongo, after not having met since 2019.

Lastly, we reiterate our position in favour of the inclusion of women in all peace process and in the new agenda for peace. We advocate for the inclusion and

meaningful participation of women in disarmament process and for taking up leadership in such processes.

We will elaborate our positions in greater detail in the thematic discussions, but I should like again to reiterate our full cooperation with you, Sir, and fellow delegations to ensure a fruitful outcome to the work of this important Committee.

The Chair: I shall now call on those delegations that have requested to speak in the exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to five minutes for the first intervention and three for the second.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I should like first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to your position and to wish you every success in your work. The Russian delegation pledges to provide you with every assistance in facilitating our meaningful discussions.

The Russian Federation categorically rejects the accusations against us, voiced in the statements of a number of delegations, as groundless. The movement towards multipolarity and the fundamental democratization of the world order is the main long-term trend in the development of international relations. The special military operation carried out by our country in Ukraine has highlighted the sore points of world politics and the economy, and has at times led the situation across the line of no return. More and more countries are not ready to put up with the dictates of the West, choosing an independent course instead.

The United States and its allies do not accept that development of events. Their efforts are aimed at retaining, at any cost, a dominant position in the military, political, financial and economic spheres. The West is not ready to build a universal architecture of equal security and cooperation; it does not want to recognize the right of independent States to freedom of choice. For the sake of retaining a free hand in promoting their narrowly selfish interests and achieving military and political superiority, Western countries have destroyed a number of pillars of the global security architecture, including agreements in the field of arms control. That has exacerbated strategic threats to the maximum, increased the potential for conflict and spurred the development of crises in many directions.

The United States sees Russia's sovereign course as the main obstacle to restoring its hegemonic positions.

The Americans are forming various coalitions against our country and other States that Washington has declared its adversaries. It is trying to punish them using a wide range of tools, from imposing unilateral sanctions to limiting participation in inter-State organizations and applying direct pressure of force. Its ideological screen is the odious concept of the rules-based order, which has been designed by a narrow group of countries to serve only their own interests and is of a confrontational and neocolonial character.

The West is increasingly pursuing a course of open confrontation with Russia, which has resulted in the crisis around Ukraine. Statements about the need to inflict "defeat on the battlefield" and "strategic defeat" on us, supplying weapons to the criminal Kyiv regime, including advanced missile systems, the provision of intelligence and target designations to destroy military and civilian targets we are defending, the direct involvement of Western advisers and mercenaries in hostilities, leading to the death of Russian soldiers and officers, as well as civilians — all this is drawing the West in so closely that we may consider it a party to an armed conflict with our country. That is fraught with escalation up to a direct military clash of nuclear Powers, with all the ensuing catastrophic consequences. We consider such a policy to be irresponsible and destructive. It seems that the United States and other NATO countries have come to believe that they are able to fully control the escalation they provoke and manage it without harming themselves. That is an extremely dangerous chimera.

The cynicism of such perfidious decisions and actions against Russia, its citizens and material assets is also striking. It is clear to the whole world that the West cannot be seen as a reliable partner and that the value of its words and promises is zero. It is from that perspective that we will continue to proceed.

Due to the duplicity and unscrupulousness of the Western countries, the further fate of multilateral associations, including the United Nations, has been called into question. They are being turned into platforms for propaganda battles. The divisive policy of the United States and its allies is impelling us towards the formation of a just, truly polycentric world order and a new, more stable architecture of international security to reinforce it. Its main feature, in addition to inclusiveness and voluntariness, should be invulnerability to external dictate and the observance of such fundamental international legal principles as

the sovereign equality of States and the indivisibility of security.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the wheel of history cannot be turned back. Russia and other sovereign countries, as well as their associations — primarily the BRICS countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization— will continue to strengthen their independence and expand cooperation, despite the attempts of the West to maintain its elusive hegemony.

Mr. Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is taking the floor to exercise its right of reply in response to the provocative statements made by the representative of the United States and the observer of the European Union (EU).

My delegation categorically rejects those statements, as they continuously seek to distort the nature of the situation on the Korean peninsula. We have never recognized and will never accept the Security Council's resolutions, which are a fall-out of the hostile United States policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that seeks to disarm and overthrow our Republic. The security landscape of the Korean peninsula is now caught up in a vicious cycle of tension and confrontation, due to the growing hostility of the United States and its following forces against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Recently, it has been heading into a much more dangerous phase.

The bottom line of United States policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is to undermine our ideology and social system by force. Accordingly, the United States has steadily renewed nuclear war scenarios aimed at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and is practicing and updating them through all sorts of joint military drills, thereby driving the situation on the Korean peninsula to the brink of war.

We have already warned on a number of occasions that the joint military exercises of the United States and South Korea are a vivid expression of hostility towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and pose a grave threat to peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region. The United States-South Korea joint military exercises were staged without interruption in the past, even when a climate of improved relations and détente had been created in the Korean peninsula. The United States even carried out joint military exercises in defiance of strong protests and denunciations at home and abroad in 2020 and 2021,

when the world was suffering the worst-ever health crisis owing to the coronavirus disease pandemic. The United States Chief Executive, in his visit to South Korea in May this year, discussed and agreed to offer enlarged nuclear deterrence to South Korea and to scale up the joint military exercises. That proves how resolutely the United States is wedded to the joint military exercises against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The ulterior motive of the United States is not merely to remove our nuclear force; its ultimate goal is to overthrow our Government someday by pressing us to lay down our nuclear weapons and further give up our exercise of the right of self-defence and make our capabilities inferior. "If our nuclear policy is to change, the world has to change and the political and military environment on the Korean peninsula should be altered", said the President of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in his policy speech at the seventh session of the fourteenth Supreme People's Assembly. If the current United States Administration seeks to address the issue of the Korean peninsula by relying on the anachronistic method of nuclear calculation, as of now the result would not be different from the past.

If the European Union is genuinely desirous of peace and security on the Korean peninsula, it should not blindly follow the United States hostile policy against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is the root cause of instability. Instead, it should first call into question the arms build-up and the joint military exercises conducted annually by the United States. If the EU wants to achieve its ideal of becoming an independent player in the international arena, it must correctly judge and address issues of international relations on the basis of the universal principle of impartiality and objectivity.

The European Union would be well advised to lend an ear to the voices of the European experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who demand an immediate reformulation of its policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, rather than getting overheated and accusing us without any discretion.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): Our delegation did not intend to take the floor, but since our country was mentioned in the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation, we have to exercise our right of reply.

The Russian Federation is waging an illegal war against Ukraine. The Russian Federation has violated the Charter of the United Nations in its entirety, as well as the principles of international law enshrined therein. The Russian Federation has violated numerous international treaties and agreements, including the Budapest Memorandum and well-known arms control treaties and agreements, including the Vienna Document.

The Russian aggression has taken a terrible toll among civilians in Ukraine. Russia is using conventional weapons, including those prohibited under international law, massively against civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. Russia has also seized the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and regularly shells the station.

In addition, most recently the Russian Federation organized a propaganda show it calls “referendums”

in the temporarily occupied territories of Kherson, Zaporizhzhya, Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine. Forcing people in those territories to fill out papers under the barrel of a gun is yet another crime committed by Russia in the course of its aggression against Ukraine. Such actions severely violate the constitutional laws of Ukraine, the norms of international law and Russia’s international obligations. That performance has nothing to do with the expression of will and has no implications for Ukraine’s territorial administrative system and internationally recognized borders. Ukraine and the international community condemn such actions of Russia and consider them null and void. We are also grateful for the principled and firm positions of the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, in non-recognition of those sham referendums.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.