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First Committee

21st meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Pieris(Sri Lanka)

In the absence of the Chair, Mr. Zambrana Flores (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-Chair, took the chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 90 to 108 (continued)

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

The Acting Chair: In accordance with the programme of work, the Committee will first hear a briefing by the Chief of the Regional Disarmament, Information and Outreach Branch at the Office for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Radha Day, who also will brief the Committee on behalf of the Directors of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament. I warmly welcome Ms. Day to the conference room today.

Following Ms. Day's statement, the Committee will change to an informal mode to afford delegations the opportunity to ask questions. Immediately thereafter, the Committee will continue its thematic discussion under the cluster "Regional disarmament and security". Time permitting, the Committee will begin its discussion under the cluster "Outer space (disarmament aspects)".

I now give the floor to the Chief of the Regional Disarmament, Information and Outreach Branch, Ms. Radha Day.

Ms. Day (Chief, Regional Disarmament, Information and Outreach Branch, Office for Disarmament Affairs): It is my pleasure to address the First Committee to provide an overview of the work of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA) Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean to complement the reports of the Secretary-General on the activities of the respective Centres since the last session of the Committee. I will also briefly touch on the work of our Office in Vienna, as some of my predecessors have done in the past.

Our Regional Centres operate in very different environments, each presenting unique challenges and constraints but also opportunities that the Centres can help seize. Africa continues to witness an entanglement of organized crime, cross-border insecurity, piracy in the high seas and acts of terrorism, while violent extremism remains a major concern across the Saharan and Sahelian regions. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to undermine peace and security at the national, subregional and regional levels.

The Asia-Pacific region has three nuclear-weapon-free zones and one nuclear-weapon-free State, yet the spectre of nuclear proliferation continues to overshadow regional security. The proliferation of small arms poses a serious threat to security and socioeconomic development, while at the same time the Asia-Pacific remains the region with the lowest number of States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components

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and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, with low reporting rates under the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the illicit trafficking of firearms and ammunition by organized criminal networks and gangs remains an obstacle to public safety and security, hampering sustainable development. While we have seen renewed momentum for peace consolidation in Colombia, we have also seen a harrowing decline in public security in Haiti, where gang violence and popular unrest have aggravated an already dire humanitarian situation.

Against that backdrop, our Regional Centres have worked hand in hand with States, regional organizations and other partners to address those security challenges, including in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular Target 16.4, on significantly reducing illicit arms flows by 2030.

To tackle acts of armed violence in the Lake Chad basin region, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) has initiated a project that focuses on preventing the acquisition of small arms and light weapons by terrorist groups in Cameroon, Chad, the Niger, Nigeria and Benin. The aim is to strengthen intelligence-sharing and the detection of vulnerabilities at border points, while building the capacities of front-line responders. UNREC also continues to support the African Union Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2030 initiative. Most recently, it supported Liberia, Tanzania and Togo in their Africa Amnesty Month activities, including the organization of sensitization campaigns, enhancing stockpile management and collecting and destroying weapons surrendered by civilians.

The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) is implementing a project to support the establishment of gun-free zones. In 14 States across South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific, enforcement officials and civil society representatives have been trained on creating delineated spaces free of small arms to combat armed violence and foster community relationships.

The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC) is supporting disarmament-

related regional and national strategies and action plans. To date, all Caribbean States that adopted the Caribbean Firearms Roadmap in 2020, including Haiti, have either drafted their national action plans or begun the process of doing so. In 2022, UNLIREC also launched a new training course on combatting arms and ammunition trafficking. It includes an overview of trends of modalities of weapon trafficking routes and of concealment and detection methods for illicit firearms trafficking, among other elements. The Centre delivered the training course in Chile, Colombia, Peru and the Dominican Republic and intends to roll it out across Latin America and the Caribbean. The Regional Centres have also supported various activities in Cameroon, South Sudan, Jamaica and soon in Honduras under the Saving Lives Entity, established by the Secretary-General.

Inclusivity and enhancing the role of women and youth in disarmament policymaking is a key part of addressing sustainably the challenges we face. With funding from the European Union, our Regional Centres continue to implement a project supporting gender mainstreaming in policies, programmes and actions in the fight against the illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons. UNREC has implemented 15 activities in six countries in Africa over the past years, with a focus on supporting the agency of women and youth in armed violence prevention. UNRCPD has worked with six countries to build the capacity of national officials, parliamentarians and civil society organizations to factor gender into national small arms and light weapons policies and to promote gender-responsive approaches to reducing armed violence. UNLIREC has held capacity-building activities in 12 countries over the past years, training law enforcement officials, prosecutors and judges to apply gender perspectives in firearms-related criminal investigation processes. The Centre has held webinars on measures to prevent armed violence against women and identify the linkages between firearms and gender-based violence in 13 countries. In addition, it continued its flagship initiative, Women Forces of Change, promoting the meaningful participation of women in disarmament, in line with resolution 65/69.

Our Regional Centres have also promoted youth engagement. UNLIREC presented youth-led initiatives on armed violence prevention and reduction in a regional event and launched a LinkedIn group page entitled “Youth Forces of Change for Peace and Disarmament

in Latin America and the Caribbean” to create a space for youth in the region to connect with peers, experts and activists to exchange information and ideas on disarmament, while UNREC has made a sustained effort to ensure that training curriculums include a youth component through collaboration with the International Action Network on Small Arms, the Small Arms Survey, UN-Women and the Mines Advisory Group, among others. Local youth representatives and civil society stakeholders have participated in the Centre’s activities and presented on initiatives on youth involvement, diversity and inclusivity.

The critical role that disarmament education can play in delivering authoritative skills and knowledge to diverse audiences to advance effective policymaking cannot be underestimated. UNREC takes every activity as an opportunity for disarmament education and peace awareness, including through social media, as was the case for the 5 September launch in Lomé by the African Union Peace and Security Council and the African Union Commission of the 2022 African Amnesty Month.

UNRCPD organized a virtual online course, the Disarmament Toolkit, reaching out to students and practitioners from civil society organizations, academia and Governments, covering a broad spectrum of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control topics. UNLIREC has continued implementing its initiative to foster national dialogue on armed violence prevention in schools. National webinars have been held in Argentina, El Salvador and Panama to showcase different initiatives implemented in Latin America to tackle firearms in schools. The Centre has also launched an animated video on the presence of firearms in schools, as part of the “back to school without arms” campaign to promote gun-free schools.

The Regional Centres have also been supporting Member States in combating the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and strengthening national implementation of multilateral non-proliferation treaties, including Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), through legal assistance, technical support and regional dialogue. UNLIREC supported the drafting of the regulations for the law that implements the Biological Weapons Convention and the Conventional Weapons Convention in Chile, conducted a weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation workshop in Peru and supported the Dominican Republic on strategic trade

control enforcement, jointly with the World Customs Organization. UNRCPD supported capacity-building workshops on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Mongolia and Cambodia, as well as for members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It also organized a seminar on The Hague Code of Conduct to prevent the proliferation of ballistic missiles in South-East Asia.

I would also like to touch briefly on the work of our Office in Vienna. The war in Ukraine has put a spotlight on the international organizations and intergovernmental processes based there, and our Office in Vienna has continued to play an important role in providing a link between those processes as relevant to our work. The Vienna Office is also coordinating our efforts as we continue to grow and expand the reach of our disarmament education programming. That includes the development of the substantive content, functionalities and usership of ODA’s e-learning platform, the Disarmament Education Dashboard, managed by the Vienna Office. With over 12,000 registered users, nearly 60 per cent of whom are women, from more than 160 countries and with over 240 learning modules, that globally accessible free resource is a critical and continuously evolving tool in our education toolbox. As the High Representative said in her opening speech to the First Committee (see A/C.1/77/PV.2), we are working to strengthen the coherence, reach and impact of our disarmament education work with a comprehensive disarmament education strategy, which we expect to launch at the end of this year.

I would be remiss if I did not highlight the challenges that the Centres face, too.

First, the lack of funding or unpredictable funding continues to limit the sustainability of our engagement.

Secondly, siloed approaches to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation limit the ability to develop more comprehensive programmes, which is what is required to tackle a broader range of underpinning drivers. All efforts should also be incorporated into broader security and development strategies, including towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Thirdly, our activities must be underpinned by national and regional ownership. Greater efforts must be made to translate global disarmament commitments into regional and national actions to make a tangible difference in people’s lives.

Fourthly, disarmament education remains vital yet severely underresourced. That calls for increased and sustained investment for our Office in Vienna, for the activities of our Regional Centres and for disarmament education globally. Twenty years after the publication of the United Nations study on the matter (A/57/124), there is an opportunity and indeed a need to re-examine the evolving priorities and requirements for effective disarmament education. I hope that we can count on all Member States through their voluntary contributions or their partnerships to address those challenges and seize opportunities together. I invite States to proactively engage with their respective Centres for assistance requirements.

Allow me to conclude by thanking the organizations and States that support our efforts. My deep appreciation goes to the European Union for the gender-mainstreaming programmes in the areas of small arms and light weapons, to Sweden and Thailand for their contribution to our Centre in Kathmandu, as well as to the Republic of Korea for its support to the Republic of Korea-United Nations Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues. My sincere words of appreciation also go to Italy for its contribution towards the Centre in Lomé and, in terms of our Office in Lima, to Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States for their contribution in support of activities related to the Caribbean Firearms Roadmap. I extend words of appreciation to Canada and Sweden for activities on women, youth and disarmament, and to Spain for its contribution to activities linked to Disarmament to Save Humanity. I also thank Guyana, Mexico, Panama and Peru. Furthermore, I would like to thank Austria for its steadfast support to our Vienna Office, as well as Saudi Arabia. Finally, on behalf of High Representative Nakamitsu, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Governments of the generous host countries, Togo, Nepal and Peru.

The Acting Chair: I thank the Chief of the Regional Disarmament, Information and Outreach Branch, for her statement.

In keeping with the established practice of the Committee, I shall now suspend the meeting to afford delegations the opportunity to have an interactive discussion on the briefing we just heard through an informal question and answer session.

The meeting was suspended at 3.20 p.m. and resumed at 3.25 p.m.

The Acting Chair: The Committee will now continue its thematic discussion under the cluster “Regional disarmament and security”. Before I open the floor, I would like to remind all delegations that the time limit for the statements during the thematic segment is five minutes when speaking in their national capacity and seven minutes when speaking on behalf of several delegations. Delegations wishing to exercise their right of reply will be able to do so after we have exhausted the list of speakers for this cluster.

Ms. Gohiwar Aryal (Nepal): Nepal aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) (see A/C.1/77/PV.19).

Nepal has remained a strong supporter of regional disarmament architectures, which serve as a catalyst for enduring peace and security in the world. We believe that regional approaches to disarmament strengthen global disarmament efforts and therefore should be pursued simultaneously. Nepal supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the interest of sustainable peace and security in the region. We underscore the importance of diplomacy and dialogue in the region to foster confidence and trust and reduce military spending.

Disarmament initiatives become successful when trust and confidence are cultivated through effective partnerships between Governments, the expert community and civil society. The wider participation of women and youths remains essential as they are the force for change and progress. We emphasize disarmament and non-proliferation education to enhance awareness among people about the humanitarian consequences of weapons and to garner general support for the cause of peace and disarmament.

With the support of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD), Nepal has developed a textbook on peace and disarmament education for grades eight to ten. It has been an effective means to instil in young minds the importance of peace and disarmament.

United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament provide a permanent platform to Member States for constant dialogue, exchange of views and best practices. We encourage them to facilitate sustained security dialogue customized to the region and to contribute to the development of a common regional approach to disarmament. We emphasize that all three United Nations Regional Centres for Peace

and Disarmament, in Africa, Asia and Latin America, should be further strengthened with adequate resources to enable them to synergize overall disarmament efforts in the respective regions.

Since the late 1980s, Nepal has partnered with UNRCPD in organizing regional meetings and dialogue under the Kathmandu Process. We are committed to resuming the process to foster confidence and common understanding for peace and disarmament in the region and beyond. As the host country, Nepal will continue to extend its support to UNRCPD for its capacity-building, awareness-raising programmes and efforts for the universalization and implementation of multilateral disarmament instruments. UNRCPD has worked hard to strengthen 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 mainstream gender perspectives in disarmament, and to support the establishment and maintenance of gun-free zones, among others. We encourage the Member States of the region to identify their areas of interest and collaborate with the Centre. Nepal calls on the Members States and non-governmental organizations in the region and beyond to make voluntary contributions to the Centre to ensure the effective implementation of activities mandated by the General Assembly.

In conclusion, Nepal has tabled a draft resolution entitled “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific”, contained in A/C.1/77/L.37, for the consideration of the Committee. We thank the 19 Member States that have already sponsored the draft resolution. We are confident that, as in previous years, we will have valuable support from all delegations for the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia): An effective and functioning conventional arms control regime and confidence- and security-building measures are essential for the maintenance of peace and security at the international, regional and subregional levels. In that regard, the full implementation of arms control agreements and adherence to the guiding principles of the arms control regime — namely, transparency, sufficiency, verification and limitation — are of utmost importance for ensuring military stability and predictability and reducing the risk of conflicts or escalation of tensions. For decades, Armenia has been fully compliant with its legally binding

obligations and political commitments under the Treaty on the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and the Vienna Document on Confidence-and-Security-Building Measures, including those related to arms limitations, on-site inspections and information exchange.

Armenia has consistently expressed its strong concerns regarding systematic violations of the conventional arms control regime by Azerbaijan, in particular its massive accumulation of heavy weaponry, its significant exceeding of the CFE ceilings, the exclusion of a large portion of armed forces from the verification regime, political preconditions for receiving inspections and unnotified large-scale military exercises, in violation of the Vienna Document. Those actions have seriously undermined the arms control regime and led to a deterioration of regional peace and security in the South Caucasus. The lack of an adequate, strong reaction from the international community to the destabilizing and unabated military build-up by Azerbaijan has created fertile ground for Azerbaijan to pursue a policy of use of force against Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

The open and blatant disregard by Azerbaijan of its obligations with respect to conventional arms control and regional confidence- and security-building measures culminated in the premeditated large-scale aggression against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh in the fall of 2020, amid the global pandemic. The scale of the aggression and the preceding preparations, such as regular unnotified military exercises conducted by Azerbaijan, clearly indicated that the aggression was well prepared. That country widely used all types of heavy weaponry, including multiple-launch rocket systems, artillery, missiles, military aircraft and prohibited weapons, such as cluster munitions and incendiary weapons, accumulated for decades to target the civilian population and infrastructure and commit war crimes and atrocities.

In the aftermath of the conflict, the security situation in the region remains fragile due to uncontrolled military build-up, persistent aggressive rhetoric, ceasefire violations, open territorial claims against Armenia and the denial of the very existence of Nagorno-Karabakh. On 13 September, Azerbaijan launched a military aggression targeting the eastern and south-eastern regions of Armenia, causing more than 200 deaths, including among the civilian population. The massive concentration of troops and the intensity

of the use of a wide range of heavy weapons revealed the premeditated nature of the large-scale offensive. The Azerbaijani armed forces resort on an almost daily basis to military provocations and ceasefire violations.

Armenia attaches the highest importance to the activities of international and regional organizations, including the conduct of monitoring, assessment and fact-finding missions, within their respective mandates, conflict resolution, the prevention of acts of aggression and further deterioration of security in our region.

Mr. Syrymbet (Kazakhstan): The overall disarmament process and the maintenance of global security and stability are closely interrelated and interdependent and must be reinforced with efforts at the regional level. Kazakhstan is concerned that instability and growing tensions persist in various regions of the world. Regional disarmament and security goals are being significantly undermined, while a failure to achieve them can derail the overall efforts to sustain peace and stability. Like others, we believe that the situations in Eastern Europe, North-East Asia and the Middle East, as well as other parts of the world, remain extremely tense and unpredictable. We are strongly convinced that political and diplomatic solutions are the only effective tools for dealing with those intricate, interlocking international threats.

Kazakhstan is keen to expand regional cooperation to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For that reason, we will continue to pursue the idea of establishing in Almaty a United Nations centre for the Sustainable Development Goals for Central Asia and Afghanistan. Within the region, Afghanistan's peace and security have always been a priority for my country, a goal widely shared by other actors in the region. In the spirit of my country's continued solidarity with the United Nations, we supported the United Nations August 2021 request to temporarily relocate the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan Office and other United Nations agencies accredited in Afghanistan from Kabul to Almaty.

With regard to the Korean peninsula, Kazakhstan wishes to express its support for settling the deep rift, which can be achieved only through dialogue and diplomacy. Kazakhstan supports the commitment of the majority of the international community to further preserving and implementing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the nuclear programme of

Iran, to which Kazakhstan significantly contributed by hosting two rounds of talks in Almaty. We remain hopeful that the JCPOA and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) will continue to make their contributions to strengthening the non-proliferation regime and ensuring stability and peace in the region.

The situation in the Middle East requires our immediate attention. The establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction is one of the most effective means to prevent proliferation and ensure peace, stability and trust. Kazakhstan is also proud to champion the issue of strengthening cooperation among existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and stands ready to work further on that track, including through the possible organization of additional meetings of representatives of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the near future.

Kazakhstan would like to express its appreciation to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Regional Disarmament Branch and the three United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament for their valuable contribution towards regional and global disarmament, peace and security. In particular, we reiterate our readiness to maintain the good level of cooperation with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) to support its outreach activities. We commend Member States for their ongoing financial and political contributions to the valuable services and programmes of the Regional Centres.

Kazakhstan, together with UNODA and UNRCPD, has organized a number of regional workshops on issues related to nuclear-weapon-free zones, a fissile material cut-off treaty and the Biological Weapons Convention. We also support and contribute to the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme for training future young advocates of a world free of nuclear weapons. Visiting fellows from various regions of the world are inspired to become part of the collective multilateral action for disarmament and security. The Fellowship is a valuable programme that deserves our full support.

In conclusion, I reiterate Kazakhstan's indisputable commitment to advancing regional disarmament as an essential and integral part of building the global security architecture.

Mrs. Romero López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the

representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19).

Regional and subregional initiatives for disarmament and arms control contribute substantively to the purpose of achieving a safer world by complementing efforts and multilateral negotiations in that area. Our region was a pioneer in the field, becoming the first densely populated area of the world declared as a nuclear-weapon-free zone through the Treaty of Tlatelolco. All Latin American and Caribbean countries are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We are also the region with the largest number of States parties and signatories to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Cuba holds this as a source of pride and commits to maintaining its strong advocacy for general and complete disarmament.

The Declaration of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace in January 2014 at the second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) stressed the pacifist vocation of our region. We reiterate our strict commitment to the content of the Declaration, which remains fully valid today. We will continue to act in accordance with its provisions, which should guide relations among CELAC member States and between them and the rest of the world.

The Chair took the Chair.

The United States remains the greatest threat to peace, stability and cooperation among countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. We are concerned that it still has interpretive declarations of Additional Protocols I and II of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Its irresponsible actions also undermine security in other areas of the world.

We are certain that nuclear-weapon-free zones contribute to the achievement of nuclear disarmament, strengthen the non-proliferation regime and promote the maintenance of regional and international peace and security. We therefore advocate the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different countries and regions of the world. We support the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. In order for nuclear-weapon-free zones to fulfil their purpose, the nuclear Powers must act in accordance with their responsibilities. They must respect the statutes of the zones and withdraw reservations and interpretive

declarations made with respect to the treaties that establish the zones and their protocols.

Cuba will continue to be a staunch defender of regional and international peace and security. We will continue to call for the full observance of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the statements in the Declaration of peace.

Mr. Moharram (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the sisterly Republic of Iraq on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/77/PV.20).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stresses the importance of the non-proliferation regime for the maintenance of international peace and security. Non-proliferation is one of the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Given the deep conviction of the Kingdom that peaceful cooperation among States is necessary for the achievement of prosperity and stability in the world, my country will support all international community efforts in that regard, with a view to ensuring global security and peace.

My country appreciates the important role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its Director General in verifying and monitoring the peaceful nature of the nuclear programmes of States parties to the Treaty. We also appreciate their role in making sure that there are no undeclared nuclear material and activities. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia emphasizes the importance of strengthening the role of the Agency, its impartiality and independence in the area of verification and monitoring, in accordance with its Statute and the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. We also underscore the content of paragraph 3 of the NPT, which calls on States that have plans to establish national programmes for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy to sign a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA. That provides a real guarantee without having to impose additional restrictions or misinterpret the paragraph in an attempt to obstruct the peaceful use of nuclear energy by States.

Israel's non-accession to the NPT constitutes a challenge to the credibility and universality of the Treaty and undermines the efforts of the international community in strengthening the non-proliferation regime. The Treaty ensures that nuclear technology is

not misused for armament purposes and that there are no covert and undeclared nuclear material, activities and installations that are not under the comprehensive safeguards system.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also expresses grave concern at the continued non-compliance of Iran with its nuclear undertakings, particularly in view of such IAEA reports, including those contained in documents GOV/2021/52, GOV/2022/42 and GOV/2022/39, which are related to verification in the context of the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement in Iran, as well as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and Iran's non-compliance with its obligations pursuant to international conventions. Those reports confirmed that the Agency is not able to give assurances about the peaceful nature of the nuclear programme of Iran or the existence of undeclared nuclear sites and activities there. That poses a threat to the non-proliferation regime and the establishment of security, stability and cooperation in the region. Therefore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports all international efforts aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and threatening the security of the region and the world.

The delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes the outcome 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. We pay tribute to the positive results, the adoption of the rules of procedure and the establishment of an informal working group. We look forward to supporting the third session under the chairmanship of the sisterly Lebanese Republic and to the participation of all States parties, including the sponsoring States.

Mr. Christoglou (Greece): Greece fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/77/PV.20) and wishes to add the following remarks in a national capacity.

Greece actively supports regional cooperation in the field of disarmament and security as an effective step to the fulfilment of the goal of general and complete disarmament at the global level. In that vein, my country recognizes the important work of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, in Asia and the Pacific, and in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, we express our support for agreements and partnerships for non-proliferation,

disarmament and confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels.

Moreover, my country is concerned at the diversion, illicit trade and unauthorized use of conventional arms, and especially small arms and light weapons and their related ammunition, and underlines the importance of regional and international initiatives for preventing and controlling such activities. Furthermore, we are an active member of the Group of Friends of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants, following closely and supporting the relevant activities of the Department of Peace Operations.

Being aware of the challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean region and the wider Middle East, Greece is steadily seeking to consolidate a regional security framework, primarily through dialogue and cooperation. To that end, we are always willing to encourage and promote multilateral cooperation and joint actions in the region with countries distinguished by their adherence to international law. Since 2013, Greece has created a network of tripartite and multilateral cooperation mechanisms in the region, with ever-increasing momentum. Within those cooperation schemes, dynamic synergies have been created in various sectors, such as cybersecurity, digital technology, innovation, energy, water resources management, environment and many others. We look forward to expanding the already established schemes, with the participation of other countries with which we share common principles and values. Having this in mind, Greece is ready to support this year's draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region" (A/C.1/77/L.24), as well as other draft resolutions on regional cooperation and security.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating my country's firm belief that only a process of regional dialogue will allow the countries and the peoples of the Mediterranean and the wider Middle East to coexist and thrive in conditions of peace, stability, security and economic and social development.

Mr. Alqaisi (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation aligns itself with the statements made on behalf the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/77/PV.20) and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.19). I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

At the outset, Jordan expresses its grave concern at the failure to achieve real and tangible progress in the field of disarmament, the lack of implementation of commitments agreed at previous Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the failure to achieve the universality of the Treaty. In that context, Jordan supports all regional efforts and initiatives aimed at achieving shared objectives in the field of disarmament, particularly those that stress the importance of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions of the world, including the Middle East.

My delegation stresses the need to take practical and tangible steps to ensure the full implementation of the resolution on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and contained in document NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), annex. We reaffirm that the resolution to establish that zone in the Middle East was and remains an integral part of the package of the indefinite extension of the Treaty adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

In order to contribute to the implementation of that resolution and build on the regional efforts to eliminate the risk of weapons of mass destruction that threatens the Middle East region, Jordan reiterates its call on all States Member of the United Nations to support the outcomes of the first and second sessions of the United Nations Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which were held under the respective presidencies of Jordan and sisterly State of Kuwait. We also support the efforts of the sisterly Lebanese Republic as the incoming President of the third session of the Conference. In that regard, we emphasize the need for greater efforts to promote the achievements made. We reiterate in that context our call on Israel to join the Conference without any precondition, to accede to the NPT and to place all its nuclear facilities and activities under the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In conclusion, I reiterate the full support of my country's delegation for the work of the First Committee and our readiness to cooperate with all Member States to address the challenges and threats to international and regional peace and security in the field of disarmament.

Mr. Damico (Brazil): Peace and security start at home. Despite the regrettably increased levels of tension among major Powers, there are reasons for optimism at the regional level or at least in some regions. By acknowledging that they are not devoid of agency, regional Powers refuse to cross their arms in despair. On the contrary, they work tirelessly to keep the risk of contagion at bay. Commendable efforts are carried out on a daily basis to maintain stability and to foster confidence among neighbours.

In my own region, Latin America and the Caribbean, we are at the forefront of implementing the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Fifty-five years ago, with the opening for signature of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Latin America and the Caribbean initiated a new chapter in the history of international disarmament and non-proliferation efforts by paving the way for the establishment of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated region of the world. Preceding the advent of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the pioneering Latin America and Caribbean initiative set an example for the world on how to advance the ideals of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We are sincerely convinced that the strengthening of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and the creation of new zones based on consensus among all States of the respective regions constitute a crucial step towards our common goal of achieving a world free from nuclear weapons. As a member of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), we reiterate our commitment to promoting dialogue and cooperation among nuclear-weapon-free zones, including Mongolia. For that reason, we regret that the fourth Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia, in accordance with resolution 73/71, could not be convened.

A nuclear-weapon-free zone does not exist in a vacuum. For it to be truly effective, commitment is needed not only from its member States but also from extracontinental or continental Powers with *de jure* or *de facto* international responsibility for territories situated in the zone, and most importantly from nuclear-weapon States. It is to be noted that some nuclear-weapon States made interpretive declarations regarding Additional Protocols I and II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which run counter to its spirit. We urge nuclear-weapon States to examine OPANAL's proposals to resolve that problem.

Full and unequivocal security assurances to the States that comprise the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean, and respect for the military denuclearized character of the zone of application of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, are essential to give concrete meaning to it.

The withdrawal of such declarations would go a long way towards signalling the favourable disposition and good will of nuclear-weapon States. Indeed, by accepting a miniscule decrease in their security levels and by doing away with conditionalities, nuclear-weapon States would be providing a huge boost to the security of the States of the region. Nevertheless, should nuclear-weapon States continue to stick to the interpretation of the clause of undiminished security for all as an absolute zero-sum game, we risk venturing into uncharted territory. It is not a very long step for a State not receiving negative security assurances from one Power to seek military assurances from another. This race to the bottom must stop.

Brazil takes pride in having developed with Argentina over the past 30 years an innovative and highly successful model for the implementation of nuclear safeguards through the establishment of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC). ABACC is an excellent instrument for building trust and verification of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as recognized by resolution 76/52, which was adopted by consensus. Shortly after the establishment of the Agency, Brazil, Argentina, ABACC and the International Agency for Atomic Energy signed a quadripartite agreement. It ensured the physical monitoring of nuclear activities under article IV of the NPT in the two countries by both agencies. Based on the principle of neighbours watching neighbours, the verification arrangement is supported by ABACC's independent status, its advanced technical capabilities and its highly qualified personnel. As a success story and a source of inspiration and good practice in the field of non-proliferation, we will continue to disseminate ABACC's achievements in the hope that its example will be emulated in other regions.

The Chair: The Committee has just heard the last speaker on the cluster "Regional disarmament and security".

I shall now call on those who have requested to exercise the right of reply. In that connection, I would like to remind all delegations of the time constraints.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation rejects all of the accusations addressed to us, as they are baseless. Russia recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia based on the free expression of will of the peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. We were guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and other basic international documents. The Saakashvili regime moved against South Ossetia in August 2008, and a similar effort being prepared against Abkhazia was the culmination of many years of violent policies by Tbilisi against those small nations. That left them no choice but to ensure their security and right to exist through self-determination as independent States. Having repelled Georgia's aggression, our State guaranteed the survival and peaceful future of the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

We are very concerned about the disconcerting information we have heard from reliable sources that the Kyiv regime is preparing to carry out a provocation using an explosive device laden with radioactive materials, a so-called dirty bomb. The goal of the provocation is clear — to accuse Russia of using weapons of mass destruction. The authorities of Ukraine and their patrons in the West are counting on all this leading to a powerful anti-Russian campaign. They think it will undermine trust in Moscow by its partners and that it will isolate our country internationally. According to our data, the Ukrainians have already begun implementing that plan. Specifically, the Eastern Mining and Processing Plant in Zhovti Vody and the Institute for Nuclear Research in Kyiv have been tasked with preparing such a bomb. We cannot rule out that certain Western countries will provide assistance in that task. According to information we have received, those countries have been negotiating with Ukraine to deliver components for a dirty bomb. According to information that Russia has, the detonation of that device by the Kyiv regime will be disguised as an accidental detonation of a Russian low-yield nuclear munition that uses a highly enriched uranium warhead.

In that context, we recall the irresponsible statements by Mr. Zelenskyy in February at the Munich Security Conference to the effect that the non-nuclear status of Ukraine might have to be reviewed. That would amount to an attempt to acquire nuclear weapons, to

the detriment of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Considering the recent statements by Kyiv about the need for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to carry out so-called “preventive nuclear strikes against Russia”, this is completely unacceptable and cannot be allowed. We demand that the Kyiv authorities and the Western patrons that control them stop committing acts that lead the world towards nuclear disaster and threaten the lives of completely innocent civilians. It is reckless to ignore Russian warnings on this front and to test existing red lines in the nuclear realm.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): In his statement this morning, the representative of the United States of America (see A/C.1/77/PV.20) spoke utter nonsense about China’s Taiwan question and China’s nuclear policy, making groundless accusations against China. China resolutely opposes and firmly rejects this. On 25 October 1971, exactly 51 years ago, the General Assembly, at its twenty-sixth session, adopted resolution 2758 (XXVI) by an overwhelming majority. The resolution explicitly restored all rights to the People’s Republic of China and recognized the representatives of its Government as the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations.

Today the United States is once again manipulating the Taiwan question on the platform of the General Assembly, which will surely meet with rejection and opposition by the international community. The question of Taiwan is purely an internal affair of China that brooks no interference from any external forces. China firmly opposes the United States’ manipulation of Taiwan-related issues, as well as its words and actions to provoke confrontation in the region. I reiterate here that Taiwan belongs to China. It is up to the Chinese people to resolve the Taiwan issue. We remain sincerely committed to and will make our best efforts for the vision of peaceful reunification. However, we will never promise to give up the use of force and we reserve the option of taking any and all necessary measures in the face of interference from external forces and the separation activities of a very small number of Taiwan independence separatists.

Time and again, the United States has made an issue out of China’s military development and arms control policies. At heart, it clings to a Cold War mentality and is obsessed with great-Power competition. It seeks to use China as its adversary to serve its global and regional security strategy. With regard to China’s nuclear policy,

China has already made a comprehensive statement under the topic of nuclear weapons. The limited nuclear deterrence developed by China is aimed solely at deterring countries and acts that attempt to use nuclear weapons against China. The policy is open, above board and transparent. If a country does not threaten China with its nuclear weapons, then it will not be met with the deterrence of China’s nuclear capability in self-defence.

Mr. Shaked (Israel): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply following references made by several delegations in this thematic cluster regarding the issue of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Some actors in the region claim that a comprehensive security architecture can be initiated in the Middle East without direct engagement with Israel, without recognition of Israel’s right to exist within safe and secure borders, without reducing regional tensions and the building of the necessary trust and confidence among regional States, and with disregard to norms and principles that were agreed upon in the relevant forums. That position is untenable.

Experience from other regions demonstrates that any framework of regional security can be the outcome only of the mutual political desire of all regional parties to engage with each other, taking into consideration the security concerns of each and every State and reflecting arrangements freely arrived at by all States concerned, as stipulated in the 1999 Disarmament Commission report (A/54/42) on guidelines and principles for nuclear-weapon-free zones. Nothing but that can serve as a useful base for discourse with regard to the establishment of a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone. Ill-motivated initiatives, such as the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, go against the guidelines and established principles of any nuclear-weapon-free zones and are unhelpful. Israel will not participate in artificial processes that bypass the established practice.

With regard to the remarks made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as already stated by our delegation, as well as by other delegations, Iran is the biggest threat to the region and beyond. It is a shameless proliferator of arms of all kinds and supports and trains proxy organizations to spread terror and engage in hostilities. All that is carried out by Iran in the name of expanding its dominance and spreading its extremist ideology.

Mr. Kim in Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is compelled to exercise its right of reply in response to the rhetoric of the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia (see A/C.1/77/PV.20).

My delegation categorically rejects the absurd remarks made by those countries. The rhetoric of the United States is nothing more than a last-ditch effort to conceal its identity as the main culprit for the escalating tensions on the Korean peninsula. The root cause of the destabilizing situation on the Korean peninsula is the hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, featuring aggressive joint military drills and the uninterrupted introduction of nuclear assets in and off the Korean peninsula. By all accounts, military tensions and the risk of a conflict run higher whenever the United States conducts joint military exercises with the mobilization of nuclear assets in the Korean peninsula.

At the same time, the United States is now hell bent on spreading disinformation in the international arena aimed at demonizing the Government of our Republic with the absurd sophistry that our nuclear weapons and the enhancement of our self-defence capability pose a serious threat to global peace and security in the region. The ulterior motive of the United States is not merely to remove our nuclear force, but also to someday overthrow my Government by pressing us to lay down our nuclear weapons and give up our exercise of the right to self-defence by making our capability inferior.

In the past, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea put forward and sustained efforts to implement numerous confidence-building and disarmament proposals to defuse the security crisis on the Korean peninsula and to ensure lasting peace and stability. However, the United States responded with a vicious, hostile policy against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and with nuclear threats and blackmail, conducting various joint military exercises against us in and around the Korean peninsula and introducing strategic assets and cutting-edge military hardware into South Korea. The United States' hackneyed rhetoric of diplomatic engagement is nothing but hypocrisy meant to conceal its aggressive nature and evade responsibility for stepped-up tensions in the Korean peninsula.

War games are not compatible with dialogue. As the hostile policy and nuclear blackmail of the United States steps up, our strength is bound to grow proportionately.

The United States has compelled the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to adopt a law on the policy of nuclear forces, in defiance of its hostility. The United States must bear in mind that its heinous, hostile policy has brought about today's reality. It should reflect on how far it will drive the current situation in the future.

The reckless remarks of the United Kingdom and Australia constitute a grave, politically motivated provocation. It is dreadfully ridiculous that the United Kingdom and Australia are acting as if they were the arbiters of disarmament. The United Kingdom and Australia undermine the global non-proliferation regime through the AUKUS partnership with the United States. Those countries are shamefully at the forefront of those blindly following the hostile policy of the United States against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The United Kingdom's nuclear weapons policy includes increasing its stockpile of nuclear weapons, lowering the threshold for the possible use of such weapons and reducing transparency about its nuclear weapons. The United Kingdom and Australia are well advised to look into the mirror and clean up their smeared faces before pointing an accusing finger at others. My country's efforts to enhance its war deterrent force are aimed at safeguarding national security and ensuring development. No one can dispute such a warranted exercise of the right to self-defence.

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

Mr. Karczmarz (European Union): I regret that I have to take the floor on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States in response to the statement of the Russian Federation referring to so-called referendums on Ukrainian territory.

The European Union firmly rejects and unequivocally condemns the illegal annexation by Russia of Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions that followed the sham so-called referendums, which had nothing to do with free expression of will. They took place amid widespread and systematic abuses of human rights, as well as the intimidation of Ukrainian citizens by Russia. There are shocking reports, including by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, which several days ago submitted its report (A/77/533) to the General Assembly on atrocities conducted by Russia, including arbitrary executions and detentions, torture and other ill treatment, sexual and gender-

based violence, and unlawful, forcible transfers and deportations of a significant number of Ukrainian civilians, including children, to territories under Russian military control and to Russia. The EU does not and will never recognize the illegal annexations, just as we have never recognized the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sebastopol in 2014. Those regions are part of Ukraine.

Mr. Gurbanov (Azerbaijan): It was not our intention to take the floor. However, given another misstatement by the delegation of Armenia, we are compelled to do so in our national capacity.

There is nothing surprising in the groundless comments just made by the representative of Armenia, at the core of which is an evident attempt to conceal his own Government's misdeeds and war crimes. It is paradoxical that Armenia, the country that unleashed aggression against Azerbaijan, held the sovereign territories of my country under occupation for almost 30 years, carried out ethnic cleansing on a massive scale, and committed other heinous crimes during the war, is now appealing to the international community and talking about territorial claims.

The act of aggression by Armenia in the fall of 2020 was a logical consequence of its decades-long impunity. Direct and indiscriminate missile attacks that struck Azerbaijani cities and districts, including with the use of internationally banned cluster bombs, killed and wounded hundreds of civilians and destroyed numerous civilian objects. Azerbaijan resolutely responded to protect its people and restore its territorial integrity, acting exclusively on its sovereign soil, in full conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Armenia used our formerly occupied territories to conceal its military activities from the relevant international and regional arms control and verification mechanisms, including the deployment of forces and the stockpiling of undeclared and uncontrolled military equipment, armaments and ammunitions in those territories. As we have reported in the past, over the years Armenia has provided inaccurate and incomplete information about its armed forces in the annual Global Exchange of Military Information under the 2011 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Vienna Document and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

In contrast to Armenia's assertions in regard to imaginary aggressions, it was Azerbaijan that, after the end of the conflict, initiated the process of normalizing inter-State relations based on mutual recognition of and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity within their internationally recognized borders, and pushed for concrete results on three specific tracks forming the agenda of bilateral discussions, namely, the delimitation and demarcation of the State border, the earliest possible conclusion of a peace treaty and the opening of transport communications in the region.

Despite what Armenia claims, its refusal to fully withdraw the remnants of its armed forces and illegal armed bands from the territories of Azerbaijan, regular ceasefire violations, ongoing mine terrorism and references to localities in Azerbaijan with old or fake names, testify to its interference in the internal affairs of Azerbaijan. In accordance with its Constitution, Azerbaijan holds an inherent right to neutralize any terror act and provocation committed in its territories.

While projecting itself as a proponent of human rights and democracy, Armenia continues without any hesitation to deny its responsibility for numerous war crimes committed by its forces, agents, officials and other persons under its direction and control, and refuses to prosecute and punish the perpetrators. Instead of attempting to distort reality, mislead the international community here, misinterpret international documents and incite enmity and hatred, Armenia must first and foremost abandon hostile narratives, cease and desist from disseminating propaganda, prosecute and punish numerous war crimes for which it is responsible, commit to the normalization of inter-State relations based on international law, comply faithfully with its international obligations and support efforts aimed at building, strengthening and sustaining peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked for the floor again as I find myself obliged to clarify certain aspects of remarks made by the representative of the United States of America (see A/C.1/77/PV.20) regarding Syrian's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

My delegation categorically rejects the statement of the United States representative regarding Syria's lack of cooperation with the IAEA and considers it to be a political statement against Syria. It is well known that my country was among the first to join the IAEA

and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968, the same year the Treaty was adopted. My country was and continues to be among the first countries to work diligently at the regional and international levels towards establishing a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Syria has a long record in that regard that nobody can ignore.

My country also implements its obligations related to the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement that we have signed with the IAEA, whereby the Agency's inspectors carry out regular annual visits to my country. Syria fully facilitates their ability to carry out their tasks according to that Agreement. The country that protects the Israeli nuclear arsenal and provides Israel with equipment and developed nuclear technologies, while also encouraging it to maintain its nuclear facilities outside any kind of international oversight and the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system, cannot be taken seriously. Its professed eagerness to maintain peace and security in the Middle East and the regional non-proliferation system lacks credibility.

Turning to the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom (see A/C.1/77/PV.20), my delegation condemns and deplores the inappropriate language that the representative of Britain used in referring to the name of my country. That language is inappropriate for this respectful forum. My delegation is not incapable of using similar non-diplomatic terms, but our desire to maintain a constructive and positive work environment prevents us from doing the same.

Regarding the accusations and claims launched by the representative of Britain, my delegation categorically rejects and strongly condemns those false claims and baseless accusations concerning Syria's cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Syria has eliminated its entire chemical stock and destroyed its production facilities, as was confirmed by the Special Coordinator for the Joint Mission of the OPCW and the United Nations in June 2014.

Syria has reiterated frequently that it does not recognize the legitimacy of the so-called Investigation and Identification Team (ITT) and we believe that the decision to establish such a team is part of a plan targeting Syria. That is why the team ignored the full cooperation of Syria with the Organization and accused us of non-compliance with it. That

decision was a politicized one and will not serve the purpose of achieving the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The OPCW is used as an instrument to implement political agendas. Clear evidence of that are the Organization's decision-making mechanisms, which have given rise to divisions and polarization within the OPCW, while traditional practices in terms of consensus decision-making are being ignored. Britain's abhorrent colonialism brought disasters and destruction to our region and its policy is venom with no antidote. Britain has sponsored terrorism and terrorists in my country since the beginning of the crisis, providing them with all kinds of assistance, including weapons, ammunition, intelligence services, equipment and media coverage. The British intelligence established the White Helmets, which is an arm of the Al-Nusra Front, a group designated as a terrorist organization by the Security Council. That group serves the United Kingdom's hostile policies against Syria, including the implementation of its instructions to fabricate theatrical episodes about the use of chemical weapons in order to accuse the Syrian Arab Army of them and to carry out acts of aggression against the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic in response.

Mr. Sung Hoon Kim (Republic of Korea): My delegation regrets having to take the floor to exercise the right of reply to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (see A/C.1/77/PV.20).

The allegations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have been vigorously refuted by other delegations, as well as by my own. As the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea mentioned this morning, the joint military exercises started in 1954, one year after the armistice, because we suffered a war of aggression started by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is the very root cause. My delegation would like to bring to attention Security Council resolutions 82 (1950), 83 (1950) and 84 (1950), which clearly state that "the armed attack on the Republic of Korea by forces from North Korea ... constitutes a breach of the peace".

This year alone, we have witnessed more than 40 launches of ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is ready to conduct its seventh nuclear test, coupled with the adoption of its

new nuclear forces law, which lowers the threshold for use of nuclear weapons. All of this demonstrates the hostile intention and threat of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, both in action and words. The combined defence and deterrence posture, including joint exercises, is a response to that military threat. Among the list of military exercises that was referred to by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise has a rather unfortunate background because it was introduced in 1968 as a response to the attempt by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to assassinate the President of the Republic of Korea with its special forces early that year.

If the Democratic People's Republic of Korea sincerely intends to fulfil its responsibility and duty in the cause for building a prosperous and peaceful world, as we heard from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea statement this morning, that must begin with abiding in good faith by all the relevant Security Council resolutions by abandoning all its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. Its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes are unlawful, and it is the main culprit that undermines peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, the region and beyond.

My delegation would like to recall Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations, which reads: "the members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council". That is the responsibility and duty they must fulfil in the first place. My delegation strongly urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to stop all kinds of provocations and to return to the denuclearization talks. The doors for dialogue remain open.

Mr. Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am compelled to take the floor to reject the allegations made by the representatives of the Israeli regime and the United Kingdom (see A/C.1/77/PV.20) against my country.

While categorically rejecting the unfounded accusations against my country, I would like to underline that the dissemination of fake news and unfounded accusations against regional actors, including through the pursuit of widespread and systematic disinformation and Iranophobic campaigns, has long been a standard practice of the Israeli regime. The main objective of such attempts is to whitewash the destabilizing policies

and criminal practices of the regime in such a volatile region as the Middle East.

However, no amount of smear campaigns against others can detract attention from the brutalities, crimes and lawlessness of the Israeli regime, which include but are not limited to the waging of over 15 wars in the region over the past seven decades; the commission of acts of aggression against all of its neighbours, without exception; the invasion of other countries in the region and beyond; the continuation of its unlawful occupation of Palestine and parts of Syria and Lebanon; the imposition of an inhuman blockade on the Gaza Strip for over a decade; the unlawful construction and expansion of settlements; the construction of an illegal separation wall in pursuit of its racist policies; the violation of hundreds of United Nations resolutions, including a large number of binding Security Council resolutions, *inter alia* resolutions 1559 (2004), 1701 (2006) and 2334 (2016); the assassination of several Iranian nuclear scientists; and the conduct of many other sabotage, subversive, divisive and destabilizing activities in the region, with far-reaching implications for international peace and security.

Likewise, a brief look at the Israeli regime's practices in the area of armaments indicates how destructive and destabilizing they are. They include, *inter alia*, the massive accumulation of the most sophisticated conventional weapons, the development and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as clandestine nuclear activities in unsafeguarded nuclear facilities. The Israeli regime also refuses to join the legally binding international instruments banning weapons of mass destruction and hampers all international efforts aimed at establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, as proposed by Iran in 1974. The fact that the Israeli regime has admitted that it will continue to destroy Iranian capabilities proves beyond any doubt that it has been responsible for the terrorist attacks against our peaceful nuclear programme in the past. Therefore, the regime must be held accountable for the consequences of its unlawful measures.

On another point, we implore the Government of the United Kingdom to uphold its duty and legal responsibilities in relation to nuclear disarmament under article VI of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The indisputable fact, however, is that this country is in flagrant non-compliance. It not only fails to shoulder that responsibility; it is also strengthening its

nuclear arsenal, participates in nuclear sharing and has signed, together with the United States of America, the AUKUS deal, all of which have seriously complicated its non-proliferation obligations. The United Kingdom has likewise fallen short of its obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. When it comes to Iran's peaceful nuclear programme, that country has no moral ground and should not be repeating those falsehoods.

Finally, contrary to the claims of our Saudi colleague, Iran is upholding its commitments. We look forward to Saudi Arabia satisfying the ongoing request of the International Atomic Energy Agency by adopting a comprehensive safeguards agreement, as the previous small quantities protocol is not enough to ensure a safeguarded nuclear programme by Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Turner (United States of America): Given the small amount of time allotted to me, I will not respond to the statements made against my country by China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or even Syria and Iran, primarily because they recapitulate well-known positions.

I would, however, like to respond to my Russian colleague because of the implied threat to take specific action. He has levelled a very serious charge, according to which the Ukrainians, with the assistance of America and others, are somehow preparing a dirty bomb to widen this war even further. The United States Government was concerned enough about that threat that high-level officials even reached out to their Russian counterparts to talk to them about it. This strikes us as another case of disinformation to create a potential pretext for Russia to use a tactical weapon. As such, it is another example of the kind of nuclear sabre-rattling in which Russia has been engaging, which is very reckless and very dangerous. We would urge Russia to refrain from making those kinds of implicit threats.

Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia): I have requested the floor to respond to the statement just made by the representative of Azerbaijan. Let me stress several points.

First, we deplore attempts to justify heinous crimes and violations of the norms of international arms control by presenting sovereignty claims. The Committee discusses issues related to international security and not the legal status of territories. This is dangerous behaviour, and history is aware of such claims voiced by the aggressors and perpetrators of crimes in the past.

Secondly, Azerbaijan has similarly attempted throughout the years to justify its non-compliance with the conventional arms control regimes by using the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a pretext, while at the same time rejecting all proposals put forward by the mediators aimed at establishing confidence- and security-building mechanisms, and also using that pretext to continue its massive military build-up and pursue its policy of aggression.

Thirdly, reacting to the point about incitement of hatred, let me just recall the findings of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which expressed concern in August about severe and grave human rights violations committed during the hostilities in 2020 and beyond by the Azerbaijani military forces against persons of Armenian origin. It also expressed concern about the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage, including churches, and expressed concern about incitement of racial hatred and the propagation of racist stereotypes against persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin by public figures and Governmental officials. The massive amount of disturbing evidence pointing to criminal conduct by the Azerbaijani military is undeniable. It has mostly been disseminated by sources from Azerbaijan; moreover, it has been massively celebrated in that country. It is ever more imperative that all acts of atrocities be fully investigated and that perpetrators be brought to justice.

Lastly, with respect to supporting peace, as has been stressed many times, peaceful intentions are not evident when, while peace talks are under way, threats of use of force are constantly voiced, force is actually being used on the ground or aggression is being carried out by one negotiating country against the other negotiating country. We note with utmost concern that Azerbaijan's latest attacks have only come to demonstrate that, in the absence of proper accountability measures, policies of aggression are likely to continue and increase. That must be stopped and condemned at all levels.

Mr. Moharram (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked for the floor to exercise the right of reply to the statement made by my colleague the representative of Iran. I would like to stress that in 2009, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed and ratified the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement of the International Atomic Energy Agency. With regard to the small quantities protocol, everybody knows that it is applied to countries that do not undertake nuclear or enrichment activities.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is committed to meeting its international commitments, and we call on Iran to meet its international commitments as well.

Mr. Kim In Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation is exercising its second right of reply in response to the provocative statement made by the representative of South Korea.

We categorically reject the provocative allegation made by the representative of South Korea. The Korean War was ignited by the United States of America in order to realize its wild ambition to rule over the entire Korean peninsula and to seek hegemonic dominance over the whole world. History cannot be denied. The aggressive nature of the United States has not changed in the least and South Korea would be well advised to study history. It is rather erratic for South Korea to interfere out of nowhere and to speak for the United States. However, that is no wonder, given the current status of South Korea. South Korea is the only country on this planet with no jurisdiction over wartime operations. It is pathetic that South Korea should so heavily depend on the United States for its own security and import advanced military hardware from the United States in order to make up for its military inferiority to us.

The President of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea said that with the adoption of the law on the nuclear force policy, our status as a nuclear-weapon State has become irreversible. The current South Korean conservative force is resorting to an extremely ferocious confrontational policy against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that surpasses that of any of the previous conservative Governments, thus driving the situation on the Korean peninsula to the brink of war.

Moreover, the current South Korean conservative force has designated our Government and army as its arch enemy and is resorting to all sorts of evil and inappropriate acts. Today South Korea is frantically involved in dangerous military actions. It is modernizing armaments and clamouring for a strengthened combined defence posture through enhanced extended deterrence. It is also increasing response capability through the establishment of the so-called three axis system. Worse still, South Korea is even now at this moment conducting different kinds of joint military exercises with the United States on land, at sea and in the air, coupled with military provocations in sensitive

areas, thus aggravating the already tense situation. We will watch closely the dangerous military actions of South Korea and respond more strongly to any military provocation by South Korea. If South Korea continues to aggravate military tensions while threatening our security, it shall inevitably pay a high price for it.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is compelled once more to take the floor in exercise of the right of reply in order to respond to the baseless accusations made against our country by the delegations of the European Union and the United States of America.

The special military operation in Ukraine is being carried out by the Russian Federation in full compliance with its international commitments, including those foreseen in international humanitarian law. We have repeated this many times and wish to finally be heard.

I will turn now to the referendums. There were provocations by the Kyiv regime, which issued a criminal order to carry out massive artillery attacks on crowded public areas and on civilian targets. Despite that, the people were not intimidated; they went to the polls to express their will. The residents of the Donbas, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya availed themselves of their legitimate right to self-determination and made a conscious choice in favour of Russia. They had the opportunity to independently and freely express their opinions, as was confirmed by the many observers who were present as the people expressed that will. The referendums were carried out in full compliance with the principles of equality and self-determination of peoples enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations Charter, and many other international documents.

As for the situation concerning the dirty bomb, I would like to state that the delegation of the United States has merely confirmed our warnings about the fact that a scenario will unfold in which there is a provocation by the Kyiv regime. We have the most reliable possible information about that. After that happens, Russia in particular will be accused of having used a weapon of mass destruction, with all of the consequences that would entail. There will then be an anti-Russian campaign, an eroding of trust in Moscow and international isolation of Russia. We have already been through all of this, but those plans

will not succeed. Here and now, we warn the entire international community that that provocation is being prepared, even though Kyiv and its Western patrons are working hard to hide that information. We demand that the Kyiv authorities and the Western countries that control them stop undertaking acts that would lead the world to the brink of a nuclear disaster and imperil the lives of completely innocent civilians. There has been enough rocking of the nuclear boat.

Mr. Gurbanov (Azerbaijan): It is regrettable that we are compelled to again take time from the Committee's agenda to refute the distortions of the Armenian delegation.

The insinuations we have heard from the representative of Armenia raise the obvious question of whether that delegation is aware of the functions of the First Committee and the topics under consideration. Given what the representative of Armenia has said, the answer is definitely negative. Instead of repeating obsolete narratives and unnecessary discourse here, Armenia must understand once and for all that respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States is an absolute imperative for regional security. The goal of a peaceful, safe, developing and sustainable region cannot be achieved by disrespecting international law, resorting to provocations, endlessly replicating outdated false narratives, and pursuing the policy of hatred, animosity and territorial claims.

Immediately after the end of the conflict in November 2020, it was Azerbaijan that initiated the process of normalizing inter-State relations with Armenia, which will also contribute to broader regional peace, stability and security. With the war over and the conflict subsequently resolved, Azerbaijan has repeatedly stated its readiness to embark upon the process of restoring good-neighbourly relations with Armenia and to start negotiations on a peace agreement with that country, based on mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

At the current post-conflict stage, the absolute priority of Azerbaijan is the early establishment of long-term and sustainable peace. At this critical juncture, all efforts must be directed towards the goal of making peace in the region irreversible through the signing of a peace treaty based on the five principles proposed by Azerbaijan. There is no alternative to peace. To that end, we demand that Armenia fully implement the relevant provisions stipulated in the trilateral statements without

torpedoing the peace process with artificial delays and pointless excuses that would only testify to Armenia's unconstructive attitude towards its obligations.

Mr. Knyazyan (Armenia): I apologize for taking the floor a second time. I will be very brief.

The unapologetic use of force as a means of resolving conflicts and disputes has undermined the arms control regime immensely in our region. Azerbaijan pursues a policy of continuous aggression to acquire territories as a new normal for the region. The illegal actions of Azerbaijan represent a threat to international and regional peace and security and must be condemned and stopped. The resolute and unequivocal reaction of the international community to those plans is vital to reversing the spiral of violence in the region.

Also, let me reiterate that it is imperative that Azerbaijan withdraw its armed forces from the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, release and repatriate the Armenian prisoners of war illegally held in Azerbaijan, clarify the fate of victims of enforced disappearances and observe the ceasefire regime.

The Chair: The Committee will now begin its thematic discussion under the cluster "Outer space (disarmament aspects)".

Ms. Werdaningtyas (Indonesia): I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

NAM recognizes the common interest of all humankind and the inalienable, legitimate, sovereign rights of all States to the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes. NAM reconfirms its stand of opposing and rejecting any acts denying or violating that common interest and emphasizes that the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including a ban to deploy or use weapons therein, would avert a grave danger to international peace and security. NAM expresses its serious concern regarding the threats to international peace and security posed by the possible weaponization of outer space or turning outer space into a domain for warfare and armed conflicts. NAM emphasizes the paramount importance of strict compliance with existing arms limitation and disarmament agreements relevant to outer space, including bilateral agreements, and with the existing legal regime concerning the use of outer space. NAM also calls for the promotion and strengthening of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

NAM re-emphasizes the urgent need for the commencement of substantive negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) on a legally binding and multilaterally verifiable instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects. NAM rejects the declaration by the United States in 2018 that space is a war-fighting domain or the next battlefield and accordingly 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, including through the establishment of an ad hoc committee under this agenda item as early as possible, taking note of the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects, presented jointly by Russia and China in the CD on 12 February 2008 and updated in 2014.

Taking note of the substantive progress made through the discussions of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) established pursuant to resolution 72/250, as reflected in the draft final report of the GGE, and expressing strong disappointment that consensus on the draft final report of the GGE was blocked by its member from the United States, NAM notes that it could have represented a good basis for further negotiations towards adopting an international legally binding instrument.

NAM continues to be concerned over the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the threat of weaponization of outer space, which have, inter alia, contributed to the further erosion of an international climate conducive to the strengthening of international security. The abrogation of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems brought new challenges to international peace and stability and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. NAM remains seriously concerned at the negative security consequences of the deployment of strategic missile defence systems, which could trigger an arms race and lead to the further development of advanced missile systems and an increase in the number of nuclear weapons.

NAM welcomes resolution 76/22, entitled “Prevention of an arms race in outer space”, and resolution 73/31, entitled “No first placement of weapons in outer space”, both of which reaffirm the

importance and urgency of the objective of preventing an arms race in outer space and the willingness of all States to contribute to reaching that common goal, as well as resolution 73/72, entitled “Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities”, which reaffirms that preventing an arms race in outer space is in the interest of maintaining international peace and security.

NAM underscores that while voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures may partially contribute to reducing mistrust and enhancing the safety of outer space operations in the short term, they cannot be a substitute for the early conclusion of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including the prohibition of the placement of any weapons in outer space, as well as the threat or use of force against outer space objects. In that regard, NAM takes note of the discussions on the preparation of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space during the 2022 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. NAM further urges all Member States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

NAM continues to reaffirm the need for a universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory multilateral approach to the issue of missiles in all its aspects, negotiated multilaterally within the United Nations. Any initiative on that subject should take into account the security concerns of all States and their inherent right to peaceful uses of space technologies.

Mr. Bandiya (Nigeria): The Group of African States aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Republic of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and wishes to make the following remarks.

Outer space and celestial bodies must continue to be regarded and safeguarded as the common heritage of humankind and must be used, explored and utilized for peaceful purposes for the benefit and interest of all Member States, irrespective of their social, economic or scientific development in the spirit of cooperation.

The African Group stresses the importance of preventing an arms race in outer space through a legally binding instrument that would complement the international legal framework. The Group welcomes resolution 76/22, entitled “Prevention of an arms race in outer space” and resolution 76/23, entitled “No first placement of weapons in outer space”, both of which reaffirm the importance and urgency of the objective of preventing an arms race in outer space and the willingness of all States to contribute to reaching those common goals. The Group also welcomes resolution 76/55, entitled “Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities”, which reaffirms that preventing an arms race in outer space is in the interest of maintaining international peace and security.

In that context, the Group stresses the urgent need for our planet, including outer space, to be free of nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction and, indeed, all other kinds of weapons, as their presence constitutes an existential threat to global peace and the future survival of humankind.

The African Group emphasizes the paramount importance of strict compliance with existing arms limitation and disarmament agreements, including bilateral agreements, relevant to outer space, as well as with the existing legal regime concerning the use of outer space. The Group also calls for the promotion and strengthening of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

The Group re-emphasizes the urgent need for the commencement of substantive negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a legally binding and multilaterally verifiable instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

The African Group recalls the adoption of the African Space Policy and Strategy in 2016, which it regards as an important policy framework for the realization of an African outer space programme within the framework of Agenda 2063 of the African Union. The Group also recalls the establishment of the African Space Agency and reiterates that the immense potential of space technology and applications should be equally beneficial to all Member States. On that note, the African Group calls on the United Nations to promote equal and non-discriminatory access to outer space for all nations.

The Group also stresses the importance of the international legal framework that allows for the equal

exploration of outer space based on the principles of non-appropriation and the peaceful uses of outer space in conformity with the five United Nations treaties governing space activities, in particular the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. The African Group maintains that the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities continue to represent an important contribution towards maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes.

The intentional creation of space debris arising from the deliberate destruction of space systems represents a major concern for the African Group due to its consequences on the future exploration and use of outer space. Therefore, the mitigation of space debris and the prohibition of their intentional creation through the deliberate destruction of space systems should be among the priorities of the work of the United Nations. Challenges related to space activities, in particular that of space debris, should be addressed in such a way that it will not jeopardize the development of the peaceful space capabilities by developing countries.

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

The world has witnessed much change since the dawn of the space age approximately six decades ago. The international community has benefited immensely from enhancements in the telecommunications and financial sectors that have been made possible by space-based technology.

At the fifty-fifth ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 3 August 2022 in Phnom Penh, ASEAN Foreign Ministers noted ongoing multilateral discussions on emerging issues involving international peace and security, such as outer space. They reiterated that access to outer space is an inalienable right of all States and that the use of outer space should be exclusively for peaceful purposes and the collective benefit of humankind. All activities in outer space must be conducted in accordance with international law and the principle of the non-appropriation of outer space.

ASEAN reaffirms that the prevention of an arms race in outer space and its weaponization is of vital importance. ASEAN urges all Member States to respect and ensure the full implementation of all related

United Nations instruments and the relevant General Assembly resolutions. We reiterate the urgent need for the commencement of substantive negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a legally binding and multilaterally verifiable instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including the prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space and the prohibition of the threat or use of force against outer space objects.

Given that it is incumbent upon all States to ensure that the use and exploration of outer space remain peaceful, the General Assembly must play a vital role in fostering continued dialogue on current issues and challenges in that field. ASEAN welcomes the establishment of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, pursuant to resolution 76/231. We note the submissions by delegations and institutions that contribute to the OEWG's discussions, including the working paper on the duty of due regard, submitted by the Philippines. We also support other activities and initiatives that help to deepen understanding on issues pertaining to space security. Within our region, the ASEAN Regional Forum has made contributions in that connection by organizing workshops on space security. ASEAN also recognizes the significant progress made by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs in promoting international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space.

ASEAN further reaffirms 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. Any initiative on that subject should take into account the security concerns of all States and their inherent right to the peaceful use of space technologies.

We maintain our call for continued action in mitigating the effects of space debris through the relevant multilateral forums, and we stand ready to engage with all parties in moving that agenda forward.

Stressing that activities in outer space should not remain the exclusive preserve of a small group of States, we reiterate our call on all Member States — in particular those with major space capabilities — to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion of

international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes and the maintenance of international peace and security.

Finally, ASEAN encourages the strengthening of capacity-building programmes, with a particular emphasis on developing countries, to ensure that outer space is, both in principle and in practice, a common heritage of humankind of which all States can avail themselves.

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

The Arab Group believes it important that outer space be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. All forms of weapons and armed conflicts in outer space must be prohibited. The current international conventions have played a positive role in the promotion of the peaceful use of outer space and the regulation of activities therein. However, those conventions now need to be concretely developed in order to keep pace with the most recent developments and the declaration by some States of their development of capabilities either for the placement of weapons in outer space or for launching an armed attack against satellites and assets in outer space. We would like to stress that the Arab priorities in that regard are based on the following principles.

First, outer space is the common heritage of humankind. Therefore, all activities in outer space must be codified under the auspices of the United Nations in order to ensure the principles of inclusiveness, universality and international consensus in that vital field. That calls for an internationally binding instrument that would prevent an arms race in outer space.

Secondly, any endeavour to regulate activities in outer space must be aimed at safeguarding the interests of all States. It must not lead in any way to the obstruction of the exercise by States of their inherent right to the peaceful and legitimate uses of outer space that are not related to weapons.

Thirdly, the Arab Group stresses the need to maintain outer space as a peaceful environment free of conflicts. Therefore, the desired binding international instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space must cover the prohibition of placing any offensive or defensive weapons in space, of any armed attack on bodies in outer space or intentional damage to them, and of the

development or testing of any weapons or technologies whose sole purpose is to carry out armed attacks against bodies in outer space, as well as mechanisms and procedures that would enable the verification of those commitments in a multilateral framework.

Fourthly, we emphasize the importance of promoting international cooperation in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space and the inclusion of developing countries within the group of States that use and benefit from space applications and activities. In that connection, the Arab Group pays tribute to the progress made in the substantive discussions of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider and make recommendations on substantive elements of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, in accordance with resolution 72/250, which would contribute to any future negotiations on that matter.

The Arab States call for further work to launch negotiations within the United Nations on that multilateral legal instrument to fill the gaps in the international legal system that regulates the activities of States in outer space. There are heightened risks in view of the increased dependence on outer space technologies in a number of vitally important fields of strategic importance, in addition to increased levels of tension and military rivalry at the international level.

The Arab Group welcomes the establishment of the Open-Ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, in accordance with resolution 76/231. We look forward to participating constructively in the work of the third session of the Working Group and the successful conclusion of its work with a view to advancing international efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of Belarus, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Nicaragua, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and my own country, the Russian Federation, I should like to deliver a joint statement on the initiative to undertaking a political commitment not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests.

Belarus, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Nicaragua, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Russian Federation view the proposed political commitment not

to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests as a step in the right direction yet insufficient to guarantee the exclusively peaceful nature of activities in outer space or to meet the challenges of preventing an arms race in outer space provided for by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978.

The initiative related to such anti-satellite weapons is defined in draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.62, on destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests, adopted at the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, has a number of significant omissions. The adoption of that commitment does not mean refraining from the development or manufacturing of such anti-satellite systems, their use in combat or non-destructive anti-satellite tests. Also not provided for is the elimination of such weapons that already exist. As a result, to the extent that the initiative may become universal, a certain group of States that already possesses those means would be at an advantage, while other countries, primarily developing countries, would be discriminated against. All that is exacerbated by the lack of a definition of anti-satellite missiles and their testing and the lack of a verification mechanism related to that political commitment.

We reaffirm the need to take practical steps to launch negotiations on a comprehensive, legally binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space that would provide a guarantee of no first placement of weapons in outer space and no use or threat of force against space objects. We call on all States Members of the United Nations to proceed as soon as possible to the development of such an instrument to preserve outer space as a peaceful environment for the benefit of all humankind.

The Chair: I now call on the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

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

The EU and its member States are actively engaged in promoting the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment and the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis for all, for present and succeeding generations. We are strongly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which is essential for strengthening international security and stability and for safeguarding the free use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

The EU and its member States recognize outer space as a global commons, to be used for the benefit of all humankind, fostering the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Many of the systems and services that are today essential for both well-being and security depend directly or indirectly on space. The 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, as well as other applicable international law and the guiding principles developed in the United Nations framework, are the cornerstone of the global governance of outer space. We therefore stress the importance of conducting space activities in accordance therewith.

We emphasize that agreeing on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours represents a first important step to maintain space security, which should cover all relevant threats. The Open-Ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, established under resolution 76/231, is a useful tool to shape international consensus and build the common understanding and trust necessary to take more ambitious steps, potentially leading to new comprehensive, effective, verifiable, legally binding instruments designed to cover all relevant threats and contribute to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The EU and its member States remain committed to achieving a positive outcome in 2023.

The EU and its member States actively contribute to and support the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subcommittees, and we welcome the progress made on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

The space environment is becoming increasingly congested, contested and competitive. Outer space is an area in which we have seen a considerable number of challenges to our common security in recent years, which merits our full attention, including at and beyond

the current session of the General Assembly. The destruction of space objects or interruptions of their services poses threats and risks to connected societies increasingly dependent on those services. Furthermore, the dual-use nature of many space objects and systems poses challenges when it comes to protecting space assets, identifying threats and distinguishing between innocuous behaviours and potentially threatening ones. Risks or threats to space assets can in turn adversely affect sectors dependent on space-related activities, with potentially significant impacts on vital infrastructure, economies and societies. Against that backdrop, the EU and its member States underline the need to better tackle the increasing risk and threats that arise from those developments and result in challenges to our security.

We remain concerned about the development, testing and potential proliferation of anti-satellite weapons, and underline the importance of addressing such dangerous and highly destabilizing developments promptly and as part of international efforts to prevent threats to objects in outer space. Among the most imminent threats are destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite tests, whose most harmful effects can be the destruction of the targeted satellite, as well as the collateral generation of multiple space debris. We urge all States to refrain from such activities as they not only cause harm to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space but also increase the risk of miscalculation or unintended or uncontrolled escalation. In that regard, we welcome the commitments made by States not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests, and we fully support draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.62, on destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing, sponsored by the United States.

The European Union strongly condemned the Russian Federation's conduct of a kinetic direct-ascent anti-satellite weapon test against its own satellite, *Kosmos-1408*, resulting in its destruction by a missile, as a clear act of irresponsible behaviour in outer space. It generated a large amount of space debris that constitutes a recurring risk for crewed and uncrewed space activities, including at the International Space Station. The conduct of such tests is dangerous and highly destabilizing, as it could potentially lead to a deterioration of confidence among space actors, increasing the perception of threats. The European Union continues to urge all States to refrain from such irresponsible behaviour. That is a strong reminder

of the urgent need to take forward international discussions in order to agree on and implement norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours in outer space and other transparency and confidence-building measures, while ensuring compliance with existing international law.

Given the dual-use nature of many space systems, without excluding the possibility of new legally binding instruments in the future, the EU and its member States believe that an approach based on behaviours is the most pragmatic and immediate way forward to improve space security today. The EU and its member States underline that future legally binding frameworks in the scope of space security should be effective and verifiable and should be aimed at covering all relevant threats. The EU and its Member States remain convinced that transparency and confidence-building measures can make an important contribution to the security, safety and sustainability of activities in outer space. We will continue to advocate for responsible behaviours in outer space, as well as a comprehensive approach to addressing challenges, risks and threats to the peaceful use of outer space.

As firm believers in multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, the EU and its member States therefore continue to be fully committed to engaging actively and constructively in advancing space security and space governance, with the involvement of all United Nations Member States and the relevant organizations.

Ms. Cassels (Canada): Space is an integral part of daily life in Canada and across the world. It connects and informs us, enabling everything from navigation to cell phone services to financial transactions. While the rapid proliferation of space activities presents significant opportunity for humankind, the viability of all space operations is increasingly vulnerable to both natural and man-made threats. That challenge is further compounded by the growing number of space actors and the lack of a more developed regime of international norms that govern space activities.

Canada remains committed to engaging with States and stakeholders to maintain a safe, secure and sustainable outer space environment. Canada strongly supports resolution 75/36 and connected initiatives, such as the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours. Such resolutions are a welcome step towards a new approach to space

security and are important to advance progress on those issues, given the long-standing deadlock that has plagued the Conference on Disarmament.

We remain committed to preventing an arms race in outer space, but the current stalemate is not sustainable, especially given the pace at which space activities continue to increase. It is time for a pragmatic approach that is verifiable and includes objective descriptions of responsible conduct. We are pleased that the first two sessions of the OEWG have seen substantive engagement by a number of States on those issues and that there is the growing recognition that norms of responsible behaviour have an important role to play in promoting space security.

The recent United States commitment not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests is a promising example of one such norm of behaviour. Eliminating such tests is important for reducing tensions in space and preventing the creation of debris, which poses a danger to all personnel and spacecraft in operation. Canada joined that commitment at the first session of the OEWG in May, and we are pleased that a number of other States have followed suit. Canada encourages all States to join us in adopting the draft resolution on destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing (A/C.1/77/L.62) in order to foster a global norm that enhances space security.

There is an ongoing debate among States on the merits of a behaviour-based approach and the clear preference by some for legally binding instruments. Those approaches need not be contradictory. Pragmatic, broadly adopted norms of responsible behaviour could become legally binding international law in future. We must continue to move forward with practical, near-term steps that promote trust, transparency and confidence among States until we can codify norms of behaviour into law. That will reduce the potential for misunderstandings and miscalculations and prevent hostilities in, from and through space.

(spoke in French)

A behaviour-based approach also addresses the wide range of irresponsible behaviours that lead to misunderstandings and weaken space safety for all. There are also responsible behaviours that promote trust, enable better understanding and enhance space security. Encouraging responsible behaviour that is consistent with existing international norms is the

best method for maintaining international peace and security.

A safe, secure and sustainable space environment is in the interest of all humankind and the important benefits we derive from space. Canada looks forward to continued engagement with all States to achieve those common goals.

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

It is our long-standing position that outer space and other celestial bodies are the common heritage of humankind. They shall be used, explored and utilized for peaceful purposes only and for the benefit and interest of all nations. With the growing threat of weaponization and militarization of outer space, the prevention of an arms race in outer space is increasingly urgent. In that regard, we would like to highlight three salient points.

First, threats to outer space should be addressed in a comprehensive manner. All States should make efforts to prevent the militarization and weaponization of outer space. That includes the deployment of space- and Earth-based capabilities against the militarization of outer space.

While recognizing the significance of existing international instruments on outer space, including the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, they are inadequate to deter the militarization and weaponization of outer space. In that regard, there is a need to consolidate and reinforce that regime and support its effectiveness.

Therefore, Indonesia reiterates its call for the immediate negotiation and conclusion of a legally binding international instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects in the Conference on Disarmament. The conclusion of such an instrument should contribute to the prevention of the increasing risks and threats of weaponization in outer space.

Secondly, Indonesia believes that the development of norms, rules and responsible behaviour should serve as a building block towards the prevention of an arms race. The development of rules, norms and

principles of responsible behaviour shall be accorded as complimentary measure in the direction of the potential formulation of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Thirdly, Indonesia recognizes the importance of greater transparency and confidence-building measures. That includes data-sharing and accurate information in outer space activities. Transparency and confidence-building measures could facilitate trust, reduce misunderstandings and prevent conflicts. To a certain extent, they have already played active roles in arms control and disarmament. However, they have their own limitations, particularly because they are not legally binding.

In that regard, any measures designed to strengthen transparency, confidence and security in the peaceful uses of outer space cannot replace efforts towards the establishment of a multilateral agreement or agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

In conclusion, Indonesia stands ready to constructively engage in efforts to maintain a peaceful, safe, stable, secure and sustainable environment in outer space.

Mrs. Petit (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to make several remarks to complement the statement made by the representative of the European Union.

France is committed to the preservation of a safe space environment, as well as to the respect of international law, fully applicable to space activities, including the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, such as freedom of access to space and its peaceful use. Above all, we must prevent an arms race in space.

The long-term security and viability of space activities is key if we are to prevent the deterioration of conditions for the use of outer space and to preserve the access of future generations to space. The benefits we derive from space applications today can be threatened by risks of incidents, deliberate acts or even hostile acts that can aggravate the proliferation of space debris and threaten the safety, security and sustainability of the use of space. To meet those challenges, we need more transparency and trust.

First, regarding transparency, for its part, France has chosen to be very transparent about its space doctrine and policy, as well as about the capabilities we intend to develop in the years to come. As stipulated in the French defence space strategy adopted in 2019, France plans to develop its strategic intelligence and military operations support capabilities, to extend its space situational awareness capabilities to identify and characterize unfriendly or hostile acts and to develop a defensive capability in space to protect and defend its space interests. That defensive strategy is in line with international law and, in particular, the United Nations Charter.

Secondly, regarding trust and space security, France is convinced that the most concrete, pragmatic and immediately applicable means of strengthening trust among actors is to distinguish responsible behaviour from that which could threaten or undermine space security. We therefore welcome the creation of the open-ended working group tasked with defining what could be the principles, rules and norms of responsible behaviour in space. We hope that process can create positive momentum for the development of voluntary standards. If consensus is reached and effective verification measures are found, that work could then be used for future discussions on the possible development of a legally binding instrument in accordance with resolution 76/231. That step-by-step approach is now the most likely to produce results that engage all States.

It is important to fully support the work of this inclusive, interactive forum, which is already beginning to yield results through the very richness of the exchanges it generates. We will be involved until the conclusion of the Group's report next session. That work will produce the best results only if all States are able to become fully involved, without being dispatched to other forums that could duplicate efforts.

The draft treaty on the prevention of the first placement of weapons in outer space, submitted to the Conference on Disarmament, and related draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.67, submitted to the First Committee, have many shortcomings. They do not define what a weapon in outer space is, do not address the challenge of verification and could therefore have the effect of increasing mistrust and the potential for misunderstandings about States' activities and intentions. Moreover, as the majority of space assets are now dual-use, the distinction between military and civilian, threatening and non-threatening capabilities

and, ultimately, the choice to prohibit some over others, is difficult and would inevitably have an impact on the technological and economic development of all nations, including emerging space-faring nations.

Furthermore, the draft treaty and related initiatives do not address all threats, including ground-based threats launched into space, such as those posed by destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing. In that regard, we support draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.62, submitted by the United States, which calls for such tests not to be conducted. That is the first step towards a norm that must become universal and apply equally to all. Such a promising measure demonstrates that we can advance towards making space a safe and conflict-free domain for the activities of all by identifying together irresponsible or threatening behaviours and the objective, pragmatic and concrete norms that will enable us to manage them. Members can count on France to continue to be a driving force in such work to achieve that goal.

Mr. Hegazy (Egypt): Egypt aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Iraq, Nigeria and Indonesia on behalf of the Group of Arab States, the Group of African States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively.

Outer space is our shared heritage, owned equally by all the peoples of the world and a common asset for humankind. In today's world, almost all aspects of human activities on Earth are either directly or indirectly dependent on outer space technologies. In taking into consideration the extreme volatility of the outer space environment, it must not be allowed to be turned into an arena for military conflicts that could have catastrophic implications. Without prejudice to the possible value of transparency and confidence-building measures as an interim measure in the short term, there is a clear need for a legally binding instrument that would complement the existing international legal framework by preventing an arms race in outer space and filling the existing legal gaps in the area.

Such a legally binding instrument should have a comprehensive scope that primarily includes the following prohibitions: first, the placement of any weapons — defensive or offensive — in outer space; secondly, the threat or use of force against satellites or any outer space assets; thirdly, intentional harmful interference that interrupts the normal functioning of outer space assets; and, fourthly, the development,

testing and stockpiling of weapons that are specifically designed for the sole purpose of attacking outer space assets or being deployed or used as a weapon in outer space. We believe that each of those prohibitions, contained in such a legally binding instrument, can be subject to specific verification measures, using a diversified set of tools that could be supplemented by transparency measures, as well as a mechanism for consultations and dispute settlement. We also believe that such an instrument can be designed to avoid any infringement on the full utilization of the peaceful uses of outer space or dual-use technologies by all States for purposes other than weaponization. The required definitions can be easily determined in a manner that would avoid such infringement. Progress can be achieved through a gradual approach, including through the development of binding rules of States' behaviour in outer space.

In that context, Egypt once again recalls the substantive progress made during the discussions of the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, established pursuant to resolution 72/250, which witnessed a remarkable level of depth in the discussions concerning all controversial legal and technical aspects. Egypt noted with appreciation the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, pursuant to resolution 76/231, which should be a further step towards maintaining a safe and secure outer space that could also pave the way to developing legally binding rules in the domain.

Egypt and Sri Lanka have once again jointly submitted the annual draft resolution entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" (A/C.1/77/L.3). In that vein, we welcomed the consensual adoption of the annual resolution (resolution 76/22) at the seventy-sixth session, and we wish to maintain the spirit of consensus in that regard. We look forward to the support of and adoption by all Member States of that important draft resolution, which attempts to bridge the gaps and create common ground for further progress on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Lastly, Egypt reiterates its readiness to support any credible effort that complements the existing initiatives and is aimed at developing rules that would pave the way to conclude legally binding instruments on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

Ms. McIntyre (Australia): Space increasingly touches every aspect of our lives, from the global economy and international communications networks to military and defence capabilities globally. It is incumbent upon all nations to behave responsibly in space. To that end, one year ago in this forum, we agreed to establish the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours. The Working Group, which has met twice this year, has commenced an important discussion in pursuit of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Australia considers that the development of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours will complement the existing international instruments and support our shared interest in maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation and understanding.

Australia continues to have strong reservations about the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects. We have long voiced concerns that the definitional challenges of a weapon, particularly in relation to dual-use space objects and rapidly developing new technologies, are yet to be adequately addressed. The technical challenge of verifying the attributes of any object in space to assess whether or not it is a weapon continues to be significant. The work of the Open-Ended Working Group is helping our consideration of an alternative approach.

In Australia's reply to the 2021 report of the Secretary-General's (A/76/77), Australia offered the following rubric for characterizing actions or activities in space. Responsible behaviours are actions or activities that are clearly communicated, avoid surprise, respect the safety and security of other actors and beneficiaries, contribute to stability or risk reduction and avoid the provocation of tensions. Irresponsible behaviours are any actions that do not meet the aforementioned expectations and/or could deliberately or inadvertently create debris, require emergency manoeuvres to lower the risk of collision or otherwise threaten or interfere with the normal operation of space objects in peacetime.

Within that framework, we look forward to developing voluntary, non-binding norms of responsible behaviours. The development of norms, rules and principles could complement existing international law and may pave the way for the development of additional legally binding instruments in the future.

As seen in the creation of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, the development of a legally binding instrument is an iterative process, founded on open and inclusive discussions.

We need to develop a new norms-of-behaviour approach to protect the space environment. That can have far-reaching effects for space security. Earlier this year, the United States made an important commitment to refraining from destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing. Such testing is irresponsible and can generate large amounts of debris, which damages the space environment and poses a risk to the space assets of all nations. It can also be viewed as threatening behaviour, which contributes to geopolitical instability and insecurity and could fuel an arms race.

It is clear that States committed to the peaceful use of space and the prevention of an arms race should embrace that initiative. That is why I am pleased to announce that Australia will join the United States and a growing number of other States by committing not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing. We add our voice in calling for all States to join the initiative and cease a practice that has already generated many thousands of pieces of debris and driven greater tensions among States.

The Chair: I shall now call on those delegations that have requested the floor to exercise the right of reply. I would like to remind members that the first statement in the right of reply is limited to five minutes, and the second statement to three.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are compelled to take the floor to exercise the right of reply to respond to the baseless accusations made against the Russian Federation by the delegation of the European Union with regard to the outer space activities carried out by our country.

We would like to make the necessary clarification concerning the successful test conducted on 15 November 2021. The Russian Ministry of Defence conducted a test that hit the inoperative Russian spacecraft, *Tselina-D*, which had been in orbit since 1982. That activity was carried out in strict compliance with international law, including the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies and was not directed

against anyone. Given the timing and orbit involved in conducting the test, the resultant debris did not pose a threat or interfere with the operations of any space station, object or activity. The debris was logged at our Main Test and Space Systems Control Centre and duly monitored until its disintegration. Those activities were planned and carried out as part of Russian Ministry of Defence's efforts to ensure that it can defend against sudden damage incurred by other States' space objects to the country's security in outer space and on the ground, now and in the future.

Since the very beginning of space exploration, the Russian Federation has adhered to a consistent policy of preventing an arms race in outer space and preserving outer space for peaceful purposes. In that regard, we believe that we must agree as soon as possible on an international legally binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space, as the representatives of many developing countries have called for today in this conference room. The Russian-Chinese draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects already provides the foundation for such work. The draft treaty that we have proposed could include a ban on the placement of all weapons in outer space and the use or threat of force in, from or against outer space.

We also call on States to commit to taking the following measures. They must not use outer space objects as weapons against any targets on the ground or in the air or outer space; destroy, damage, disrupt or alter the flight path of other States' space objects; or create, test or deploy outer space weapons of any kind for any mission, including anti-satellite defence systems, for use against targets on the ground or in the air, as well as to eliminate the systems already in their possession; refrain from testing manned spacecraft or using them for military purposes, including anti-satellite weapons; and not assist or encourage other States, groups of States or international, intergovernmental and any non-governmental organizations, including non-governmental legal entities established, registered or located in the territories under their jurisdiction and/or control, to participate in the activities mentioned.

We believe that Russia's international initiative on no first placement of weapons in outer space, which at present is the only effective instrument for keeping space free of weapons, should be regarded as an interim steps. More than 30 States already fully participate in that initiative. We reaffirm our readiness to discuss the

entire range of space security issues with all interested States. We are convinced that launching negotiations on an international agreement banning the deployment of weapons of any kind in outer space, the use or threat of use of force against outer space objects or with their assistance is the correct path to take towards easing tensions and addressing States' concerns in the context of space security. Intermediate measures do not enhance international security; they can only harm it.

Mr. Turner (United States of America): I would like to take the floor to respond to the statement made by the representative of Russia on behalf of itself and six other countries.

Intensifying strategic competition presents a challenge to international peace and security. Such competition is increasing the potential for conflict, including conflict that extends into outer space. One can no longer speak of no first placement because, in reality, it has already occurred. Confrontation or conflict in outer space is not inevitable, however. The United States seeks to ensure that outer space remains free from conflict and has long advocated for

a comprehensive approach to address issues that could lead to conflict in outer space, including all issues related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We often hear the false argument that, if we are working on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour, then we are not working on arms control. That is incorrect. Norms are elements of risk reduction, and risk reduction is an element of arms control. As our draft resolution A/C.1/77.L.62 demonstrates, the United States is committed to progress in developing transparency and confidence-building measures and norms of responsible behaviour in outer space that could ultimately lead towards the negotiation of a legally binding agreement on destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests. That might also serve as a model for future legally binding measures. The United States encourages all nations to recognize that further destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests are in no one's interest, support the draft resolution and make that commitment a key principle of space security.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.