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Seventy-seventh session

First Committee

5th meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Pieris(Sri Lanka)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 90 to 108 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair: I count on the cooperation of delegations to respect the time limit for statements and to speak at a reasonable speed to allow for adequate interpretation. Longer statements can be posted on the eStatements portal.

Ms. Alvarado (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election to lead the efforts of the First Committee. You can count on the support of the delegation of Peru in the full exercise of your duties. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, particularly my colleague and friend Mr. Marcelo Zambrana of Bolivia, who honours us in his post as Vice-Chair.

The First Committee is convened at an extremely worrisome geopolitical context. Growing military spending, which, for the first time, exceeded \$2 trillion, and the constant maintenance, development and modernization of nuclear weapons — approximately 13,000 warheads — was compounded by the intervention of the Russian Federation in Ukraine. That has pushed mistrust and tensions between the most militarized global Powers to the limit.

The war, with its high levels of violence, large-scale humanitarian and migratory crises and the deterioration of the economy, which is still seeing the effects of the pandemic, have increased the risk of the use of nuclear

weapons amid this never-ending arms race — even if what is clear is that the state of alert and fragility in which we find ourselves is ultimately due to the existence of those weapons.

After 12 years without progress in implementing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we witnessed the failure to reach agreements at its tenth Review Conference. The particular interests of nuclear-weapon States, which, on the one hand, put their perceptions of power and security policies first and, on the other hand, unite in attitudes that make any meaningful compromise that promotes nuclear disarmament impossible, remain the major obstacle to effective progress on non-proliferation.

Such realities serve to underscore the tremendous importance and relevance of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), to which Peru is a party. Following the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, held in Vienna, we adopted a declaration and an action plan outlining its implementation, in line with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

At the same time, we must continue to make progress in signing agreements to free new areas from the presence and threat of nuclear weapons, particularly in areas of high tension. Latin America paved the way early on with the Treaty of Tlatelolco. In that vein, we fully support the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. It is essential that nuclear-weapon States provide security assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to all States parties to such zones under any circumstances and without conditions.

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Another issue that Peru believes to be a priority in our work is the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. Today their indiscriminate use claims more lives than any other kind of weapon, and they continue to play a decisive role in widespread violence, armed conflicts and criminal acts. As part of the region that suffers the most from their effects, we bear witness to the fact that their illicit trade and diversion to unauthorized users have an impact on citizen insecurity and affect governance, with negative consequences for development and internal peace. Their proliferation and massive transfers to war zones fuel the illegal market, crossing borders even to areas that may be perceived as stable.

Little, or no, progress was made at the most recent Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. On the contrary, we saw setbacks, such as ammunition not being included in processes aimed at its strict regulation. We note that the parallel initiative to set up an open-ended working group to establish a comprehensive framework on ammunition management outside the Programme of Action means, in practical terms, excluding the crucial issue of ammunition from the only United Nations mechanism on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons that contains binding political commitments, made by all States more than two decades ago.

The urgent disarmament agenda also includes the imperative need to control the misuse of information and communications technologies. The current geopolitical tensions serve to highlight the need for the proper governance of cyberspace. Some progress was made last year with the establishment of a new open-ended working group, the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security (see A/76/135) and, in addition, the joint resolution 76/19, put forward by two Powers in the General Assembly. In a completely different context, we now see the opposing positions on peace and cybersecurity and indirect questioning of the key role of the Open-ended Working Group only as clear attempts to dilute or polarize an issue that is a matter of international security for all Member States. For Peru, the primacy of the Charter of the United Nations, the application of international law and international humanitarian law in

cyberspace and the implementation of the rules, norms and principles of responsible behaviour are crucial, as is a future instrument for its legal regulation.

There are many challenges facing the First Committee. It is worrisome that humankind is still under threat from weapons of mass destruction and that we need to build consensus around weapons that are banned under international law. We cannot continue to discuss the serious arms issues that affect us all while being subject to the global power strategies of a few. Diplomacy serves to resolve conflicts. That is why we must take advantage of these spaces for dialogue and cooperation to find balances, reconcile interests and persist in creating conditions for the achievement of peace and security.

Mr. Edokpa (Nigeria): The delegation of Nigeria congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at this seventy-seventh session. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their elections. We assure you of our full support and cooperation.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/77/PV.2). We wish to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

At the previous session of the General Assembly, my delegation joined other Member States to highlight the daunting challenges confronting our world. Sadly, to date, little has changed to provide confidence and reduce the enormous challenges to global peace and security.

My delegation reiterates its continued concern over the current difficult and complex situation in the field of disarmament and international security. In that regard, Nigeria calls for renewed efforts to resolve the current impasse in achieving nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects.

Nigeria reaffirms its position on nuclear disarmament, which remains the agreed highest priority for the United Nations in the area of disarmament, in accordance with the final document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (resolution S-10/2). Nigeria is deeply concerned by the non-compliance of

nuclear-weapon States and the threat that that poses to the non-proliferation regime and the international security architecture.

Nuclear weapons represent a grave existential threat to humankind. Nigeria therefore underscores the importance of General Assembly resolution 70/34 as an integral part of the multilateral disarmament effort.

My delegation is mindful of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that could result from the deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons. To that end, my delegation calls on all States, particularly nuclear-weapon States, to take into consideration the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of such weapons for human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among other things, and to take the necessary measures aimed at the dismantling and renunciation of their nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons remain the ultimate agents of mass destruction, and their total elimination should be the final objective of all disarmament processes within the broad spectrum of goals being pursued by the United Nations. It is in that context that Nigeria strongly supports all efforts aimed at the total elimination and delegitimization of nuclear weapons as the utmost prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. In that spirit, my delegation recalls the historic entry into force of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 22 January 2021. Nigeria remains proud to have participated in the processes leading to its adoption, as well as being one of the first States to sign and ratify the Treaty. We urge all members of the international community, especially nuclear-weapon States and those under the so-called nuclear umbrella, to seize the opportunity to sign and ratify the Treaty at an early date and to pursue the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

My delegation reaffirms its full support for the adoption of the Declaration of the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, entitled, "Our commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons", which reaffirmed the determination and realization that the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is desirable. My delegation also reaffirms its support for the Vienna Action Plan, which was adopted at the first Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty held in Vienna from 21 to 23 July in order to facilitate the effective and timely implementation of the TPNW and its objectives and goals. As a State party to the African Nuclear-

Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, Nigeria also remains committed to the Treaty of Pelindaba, which reaffirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and provides a shield for the African continent.

The delegation of Nigeria underscores the importance of continued respect for the inalienable right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and stresses the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in ensuring the commitment of States to the implementation of safeguards agreements, as well as in the provision and promotion of technical assistance and cooperation, by maximizing the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development. Furthermore, we all have an obligation to protect the environment by respecting the moratorium on nuclear testing, as we work assiduously to achieve universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In that regard, my delegation calls on all States that have yet to ratify the CTBT, particularly the remaining eight States listed in annex 2 to the Treaty, to do so without further delay.

The delegation of Nigeria underscores the importance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, and of not only preserving the Commission but also realizing its deliberative objectives. Nigeria joins other members in reaffirming the importance of the work entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament.

My delegation remains committed to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Our commitment is further demonstrated by our signing and ratification of the relevant international, regional and subregional instruments, such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the Programme of Action, as well as by the establishment of sustained robust partnerships with the African Union, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and other relevant organizations. In addition, a national centre for the control of small arms and light weapons has been set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Centre has been involved in activities geared towards stemming the tide of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Gunaratna (Sri Lanka): I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections and assure you of our support in carrying out our deliberations in a productive manner.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) (see A/C.1/77/PV.2) and wishes to stress the following in our national capacity.

May I begin rather euphemistically by saying that we live in a world of great uncertainties. There is perhaps nothing more certain. Those uncertainties are in many ways our own creations: the continued environmental destruction of the planet; the pandemic that we seem to have managed at great cost but have not yet totally overcome; an international financial system that, as the Secretary-General himself put it, is morally bankrupt and either unable or unwilling to move rapidly to help countries out of the economic and financial crises they face; and a cyberspace that is unregulated and fast becoming a threat to our own collective security and stability. In short, the First Committee, which is designated with the task of deliberating on matters of international security and disarmament, meets at a time where there is undoubtedly diminished security for all. Added to that toxic mix is the continued lack of progress in the area of nuclear disarmament, the threat posed by lethal autonomous weapons, the threat of the weaponization of, and an arms race in, outer space, and the continued proliferation of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, thereby making it one of the most lucrative of trades.

The global disarmament and arms control architecture continues to face severe threats that call into question the bona fides of all the major players involved. It is precisely at a juncture such as this that we need to be cognizant of and act upon the new challenges that are ahead of the multilateral system and take effective steps to address risks and reinvigorate global cooperation, while making effective advances towards a safer world. We underline the importance and relevance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body that is empowered to consider the current challenges to global disarmament and to submit recommendations to the General Assembly. We welcome the Commission's deliberations this year and its adoption by consensus of the texts of the two working groups. We recall with pride that it was under Sri Lanka's chairmanship of NAM that a resolution was introduced that led to the convening in 1978 of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

We also emphasize the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole, multilateral negotiating body on disarmament and underscore the vital necessity for it to settle down to its substantive task of negotiating disarmament treaties. On the subject of nuclear disarmament, it appears that modernizing nuclear arsenals, conducting research on and developing new nuclear warheads and delivery systems, while singing hosannas for nuclear risk reduction, are the reality that we are confounded with, as witnessed at the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), with the first pillar of the NPT, namely, nuclear disarmament, being relegated to the background.

Sri Lanka has consistently welcomed any multilateral and bilateral effort towards nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It is only fair to say that non-proliferation and disarmament are mutually reinforcing, and one derives legitimacy and credibility from the other. Pursuing non-proliferation while ignoring nuclear disarmament creates two clubs — nuclear haves and nuclear have-nots — and is therefore not sustainable. Given the current status of imbalance and the threat faced by non-nuclear-weapon States, it is only fair to call for negotiations to begin work on a legally binding treaty on negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States.

Sri Lanka has been a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention since 1993. It is today a comprehensive multilateral treaty delegitimizing a complete category of weapons of mass destruction, with a verification system and provisions for the promotion of chemicals for peaceful purposes. We regret the non-adoption of the report of the fourth special session of the Conference of State Parties to review the operation of the Convention, owing to a lack of consensus and the politicization of issues. Sri Lanka reiterates that any use of chemical weapons demonstrates complete disregard for humankind and is reprehensible and contrary to the provisions of the Convention, as well as any accepted legal norm. It is imperative that full universality of the Convention be achieved.

Sri Lanka also believes that it is the sovereign right of all States to explore and use outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes. The threat of the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space should be prevented, as it threatens the very existence of modern living. In that regard, it is also imperative that the

current legal regime concerning the use of outer space be strengthened. We welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to hold a multi-stakeholder dialogue on outer space as part of the upcoming Summit of the Future. Sri Lanka is committed to the fundamental principles of the Outer Space Treaty. For the past four decades, Sri Lanka and Egypt have together submitted a draft resolution to the Committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We hope that this year the draft resolution will continue to enjoy members' broad support.

Today the threats posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons remain and contribute to the continued availability of weapons in the hands of non-State actors. While Sri Lanka takes note of the achievement of concrete outcomes at the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects, it hopes that the commitments made at that meeting will contribute to establishing a normative framework for small arms control. As a country that experienced a three-decade conflict that was brought to an end in 2009, Sri Lanka is a first-hand witness to the senseless destruction caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Exemplifying the strong commitment of the Government of Sri Lanka and the significant progress that has been achieved so far to demine previous conflict-affected areas in the country, Sri Lanka joined the Committee on Article 5 Implementation — mine clearance — of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, covering the period 2021-2022, and will work alongside other countries in the Committee to support State parties in their implementation efforts.

With ongoing instability in international security and mounting evidence of autonomous weapons systems being used in contemporary conflicts, an agreed international legal framework is urgently needed to guard against the serious ethical, legal, humanitarian and security risks posed by autonomous weapons systems. It is in recognition of that threat that the Secretary-General, in his report on *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), calls for States to establish internationally agreed limits on autonomous weapons systems. Having initiated State-level discussions on lethal autonomous weapons systems during its presidency of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), Sri Lanka encourages the Group

of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems to continue that process. We hope that its report and recommendations will be adopted by the CCW high contracting parties at its meeting to be held in November and that States will work towards prohibitive and regulatory limitations on the use of autonomous weapon systems. It is bad enough that we are compelled to discuss ways to prevent humans from killing each other; but an automation of the process would amount to an abdication of the little humanity that remains in the laws of war and surely be repugnant to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which discourages war, promotes peace and preserves human rights.

As the cyberthreat landscape continues to grow and expand, Sri Lanka recognizes that an equitable global digital transition requires meeting contemporary challenges, including digital governance. We believe that collaborative efforts, through institutional dialogue and confidence-building measures, can promote an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful information and communications technology environment for the world.

Sri Lanka welcomes the deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group on the Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies, as well as the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes. We hope that those deliberations will lead to logical and productive outcomes.

We live in a time when human development has declined globally over the past two years and the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development looks increasingly far away. Needless to say, since global military expenditure is approximately \$2 trillion, a diversion of expenditure from military operations to crucial economic and social development could be a game-changer in our efforts to create a safe, healthy and peaceful planet.

Mr. Al Zadjali (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman and to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your elections. I assure you that my country's delegation stands ready to cooperate with you and the other delegations of Member States to achieve our desired goals and objectives.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statements on disarmament and international security made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the Permanent Representative of the sisterly Republic of Iraq, on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/77/PV.2).

During the current session, we have noticed that many delegations are concerned about the ongoing disarmament situation. Today's security environment is becoming increasingly complex and more dangerous than ever before, which could pose further challenges to international peace and security. We believe that the main reason for that is a deviation from the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which stress good-neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the peaceful settlement of disputes and cooperation for the benefit of countries and peoples. My country's delegation calls on all Member States to work together in a spirit of partnership and responsibility to heal the rifts in the collective action system in order to maintain international peace and security and establish a global system that safeguards the security and stability of all countries and peoples throughout the world, without exception, pursuant to the concept of common security for all.

My country's delegation joins the previous speakers who expressed their concern about the failure of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to conclude an outcome document. We are also concerned about the impediments to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in the Middle East. That is a clear contravention of the provisions of the NPT and the resolutions of its Review Conferences.

The circumstances and challenges faced by our contemporary world, in particular in the vital region of the Middle East, compel us to reiterate our call for steady, responsible and serious action to ensure that the Middle East is free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs, as well as for achieving a lasting, comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East based on the terms of reference and the principle of the two-State solution. In our opinion, that is the most appropriate path to realizing security, stability and peaceful coexistence in the Middle East.

The Sultanate of Oman believes that relations among States must be based on solid foundations of confidence, mutual respect and compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. In our view, that is the basic foundation for promoting security and stability at the regional and international levels. Based on that vision, my country has always attached the utmost importance to international disarmament treaties, including the NPT of 1970, the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty of 1996 and the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1997. My country believes that those treaties and their additional protocols, safeguards and resolutions constitute the integral legal system of the non-proliferation regime. They must be preserved, without detraction or fragmentation, in order to ensure the universality and credibility of the non-proliferation regime.

My country welcomed the holding of the first two sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, under the presidency of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 2019 and the State of Kuwait in 2021. We reiterate our support for the preparations by the sisterly Lebanese Republic to hold the upcoming third session in November. We call upon all States, in particular the depository States to the NPT, to participate effectively in the Conference and facilitate the conclusion of a legally binding treaty to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs in the Middle East. We believe that would contribute greatly to putting an end to conflicts and the establishment of a zone of security, stability and coexistence.

My country reiterates its firm position on the need to enhance international cooperation for the peaceful uses of atomic energy. We reiterate the right of all Member States, without exception, to have access to nuclear technology, equipment and materials for peaceful purposes, under the international safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We call on all States to make that possible, without politicization or selectivity, in accordance with the provisions of international treaties and international law.

We also call for the promotion of joint international cooperation in the field of security related to information and communications technology, in particular cybersecurity. I refer to the efforts made by

the Government of my country through its executive programme for cybersecurity and several other innovative activities in that field. The Government has also organized national training to assess the readiness to respond to information emergencies, in addition to convening a regional conference on cybersecurity and security awareness programmes. We would like to thank all States and international and regional entities that participated in that effort. We hope that such cooperation will continue given its maximum positive benefits for the Sultanate of Oman and the region.

In conclusion, I reiterate my country's call for all States to work together in a spirit of cooperation and responsibility in order to build a more secure and stable world.

Mr. Tlalajoe (Lesotho): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. We are confident that your experience, talent and energy will ensure a successful outcome for the work of the Committee.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States, and by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.2).

We are living in uncertain times, and the need to secure the global community has never been greater. Sadly, the threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction continues to shatter our hopes for a peaceful world. That is so despite the fact that, over the years, the General Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions on the issue of arms control and disarmament, including small arms. Nuclear, chemical and biological weapons constitute a clear and present danger to global peace and security. The state of peace and security in the world is gradually getting worse, with recurring conflicts and the eruption of new ones in many parts of the world. The emergence of new extremist groups and terrorist entities has not only compounded the problem but is a stark reminder that we must act collectively to discharge the moral responsibility resting on us to ensure that people everywhere enjoy the right to peace and the sanctity of life.

The international community demonstrated its collective resolve by overwhelmingly adopting the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in 2013 and witnessed its entry into force the following year. However,

conventional weapons continue to bring untold sorrow to us in the developing world. A fair and balanced yet robust implementation of the ATT is critical in order to achieve the goals of the Treaty for the regulation of the international trade in conventional weapons and to contribute to curbing illicit transfers.

The world has long come to terms with the dangers to humankind posed by the possession of weapons of mass destruction. For that reason, Lesotho will continue to advocate for the total abolition and destruction of all nuclear weapons, which have no place in modern-day civilized society. The disarmament and international security landscape saw some progress recently with the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). However, there is still more that needs to be done, particularly by nuclear-weapon States, in the area of nuclear disarmament. The situation has been further exacerbated by the existing stockpile of nuclear weapons and the modernization of such weapons, which cast a shadow of doubt on our prospects for attaining a nuclear-weapon-free world in the immediate future. Those developments raise concerns that the risk of nuclear use is increasing and the legal obligations for non-proliferation and disarmament are being undermined. That state of affairs surely calls for action on our part as Member States.

We wish to underscore that Lesotho is strongly committed to the TPNW and will continue to support the principle of complete disarmament as the utmost prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. It is in that spirit that we appreciate the upcoming first meeting of States parties to the TPNW, to be held in Vienna in June, and the historic adoption of the political declaration and action plan, which will help set the course for the Treaty's implementation and pave the way towards our shared goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. On that note, I wish to emphasize that my delegation will continue to support all efforts to enhance the institutional fabric of the TPNW.

The possession of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains the principal threat to the survival of humankind. Sadly, discord remains among Member States on how to overcome those problems. The time has come for the international community to demonstrate its resolve and commitment to ensuring that the issue of arms control is addressed on a multilateral basis in order to secure global peace and security. The United Nations has had to grapple with crisis situations in many parts of the world as it

pursues its mandate to maintain international peace and security. As today's problems grow ever more global, multilateralism is more important than ever. There is a need to demonstrate the importance of multilateralism as a major facet of international relations. We wish to express our concern and disappointment that, at the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), held here in New York in August 2022, we failed to reach consensus on the final outcome document after four weeks of deliberations. It was our hope that the Conference would provide an opportunity for all Member States to build consensus and work in earnest to achieve the objectives of the NPT.

Allow me to reiterate Lesotho's support for all resolutions on arms control and disarmament. We aspire to a world in which people live in peace, conscious of their common humanity and their shared responsibilities for each other, for the planet and for future generations. The total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is the only unqualified assurance against the catastrophic humanitarian consequences arising from such weapons.

Finally, I wish to take this opportunity to emphasize that multilateral negotiations on disarmament will achieve tangible results only if and when we generate the necessary political will to support the process.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee. Let me assure you of my delegation's full cooperation.

The foundations of arms control and non-proliferation continue to be challenged by rogue States. The Middle East is struggling with a chronic lack of compliance with non-proliferation and arms control norms, obligations and mechanisms. That culture of non-compliance and disregard for international obligations and norms has regrettably become both very common and very dangerous in the region. In addition, worrisomely, it seems that the international community is willing to accept the existence of that culture of non-compliance. There is an urgent need to take action and focus international efforts on the implementation of, compliance with and verification of State obligations.

On the nuclear front, Israel continues to support the global non-proliferation regime. Unfortunately, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

(NPT) does not in itself provide a remedy for the unique security challenges of the region, let alone the repeated violations of the Treaty by some of its States parties. Four of the five cases of serious violations of the NPT were perpetrated in the Middle East, predominantly by Syria and Iran. For its part, Israel continues to actively support the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contributes to nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation activities, including within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

For decades now, Iran has been rapidly advancing its illicit nuclear programme and currently possesses large quantities of highly enriched nuclear material. Concurrently, Iran has made significant progress in processing uranium metal, as well as developing and industrializing advanced centrifuges. Israel continues to object to the return to the fundamentally flawed Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Those developments, especially the accumulation of irreversible knowledge by Iran, make the JCPOA worthless, even from a proliferation point of view. How is it possible to negotiate a nuclear deal that expires in just a couple of years — a deal that will funnel hundreds of millions of dollars into the coffers of a murderous regime? How can one truly believe the commitments made by a totalitarian Government that murdered a young woman, Mahsa Amini, for not properly wearing a head covering and then butchered those who protested such brutality? How can we trust the ayatollahs whose attack drones are flying in the skies above Europe as we speak? How can anyone desire a deal that would permit the world's number-one State sponsor of terrorism to continue with its intercontinental ballistic-missile programme?

Parallel to its nuclear pursuits, Iran continues to severely violate its IAEA safeguards obligations. The international community must demand that Iran cooperate with the IAEA. It must give technically credible explanations for the presence of uranium particles in three different undeclared locations. Iran's non-compliance constitutes further evidence that Iran has something to hide, and that is a military nuclear programme. Nevertheless, the international community stands idly by as Iran gallops toward nuclear weapons. The only thing that closing the IAEA's nuclear files on Iran for politically motivated reasons would do would be to completely erase the IAEA's legitimacy. The IAEA is our international nuclear watchdog, not a political pawn.

Despite the chemical-weapon disarmament process in Syria from 2014 onwards, we have witnessed hundreds of incidents where chemical weapons were used in Syria by the Al-Assad regime against the Syrian population. Two reports of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Investigation and Identification Team attributed responsibility to the Syrian Government for five different chemical attacks on civilians. It is vital that the international community remain vigilant in dealing with the challenge of Syria's non-compliance in order to prevent the further erosion of the absolute norm against the use of chemical weapons and to reinstate it. The international community must also continue to investigate Syria's current capabilities and activity with regard to its chemical-weapon programme.

The existence of undeclared nuclear activities in Syria remains relevant and worrying, as do the open questions related to the specific sites and materials within Syria. The construction of a clandestine nuclear reactor in Syria was carried out in blatant violation of Syria's safeguards obligations. Had the reactor been completed, it would have paved the way for another brutal regime to become a nuclear Power. Syria must cooperate with the IAEA.

Conventional weapons continue to claim the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent victims around the world on an annual basis —

The Chair: I call on the representative of Syria on a point of order.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to request, Mr. Chair, that you immediately alert speakers, and the current speaker in particular, of the need to abide by the rules of diplomatic discourse at the United Nations and to refrain from using words that denigrate the names of States represented in this room.

The Chair: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his intervention, which is well noted.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): In that regard, Israel delivered its annual report to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, its annual report on military expenditure and its biennial report to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In addition, Israel delivered its national report on compliance with the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Amended Protocol II. Furthermore, Israel joined

the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention as an observer and extended its moratorium on all export sales or other transfers of anti-personnel landmines for an additional period of three years, until July 2023. Israel is also a signatory State to the Arms Trade Treaty.

The field of cybersecurity is becoming more relevant every day, as evidenced just last month by Iran's dangerous cyberattack on Albania's infrastructure. That is why Israel attaches great importance to efforts to strengthen international security and stability in cyberspace. Israel's global position in the digital domain is based on a robust domestic ecosystem that encourages real-time information-sharing and the development of comprehensive methodologies. The basic tenets of Israel's cyber-ecosystem should therefore be promoted at the global level in order to enhance global resilience by means of practical cooperation and capacity-building programmes.

Finally, some actors in the region claim that a comprehensive security architecture can be initiated in the Middle East without direct engagement with Israel. They also claim that such an architecture can be created without recognizing Israel's right to exist and without reducing regional tensions. Some even claim that it can be done without building the necessary trust and confidence among the States of the region, including those that disregard norms and principles that have been agreed on in the relevant forums. That position is untenable. 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 run counter to the guidelines and established principles of any nuclear-weapon-free zone and are unhelpful. The experiences of other regions demonstrate that the only basis for any framework for regional security is mutual political desire, which means that all the parties in a region should engage with one other, taking into consideration the security concerns of each and every State. That must be done while reflecting arrangements freely arrived at by all States concerned, as stipulated in the 1999 Disarmament Commission report on guidelines and principles for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Israel has no intention of participating in such initiatives.

Miss Low (Singapore): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election and assures you of Singapore's full support for a productive session.

We align ourselves with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and Thailand, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/C.1/77/PV.2).

First, Singapore reaffirms the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The failure of the efforts to adopt a final document at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons for a second consecutive time is disappointing. Member States must make a collective effort to make progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We therefore urge all parties to redouble their efforts in the next NPT review cycle. It is nevertheless encouraging that six Member States have ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 2022 so far. We urge the remaining annex 2 countries to sign and ratify it and also hope that long-overdue progress can be made on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

We reaffirm our commitment to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty and look forward to continuing dialogue with nuclear-weapon States on their accession to the SEANWFZ Protocol without reservations. We recognize the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as the sole competent global authority in ensuring nuclear safety, security and safeguards, and as a member of the IAEA's Board of Governors, Singapore reaffirms its commitment to working closely with the Agency in the fulfilment of its mandate.

Secondly, Member States should fulfil their obligations to curb the illicit trade in and indiscriminate use of conventional weapons. Singapore welcomes the outcomes achieved at the eighth Biennial Meeting of the States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and looks forward to the establishment of a standing dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons. We were glad to be part of the 2022 Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which concluded its work in June. Singapore was also glad to have had the opportunity to co-convene an informal dialogue series on international cooperation and assistance on ammunition management in support of the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on conventional ammunition.

Thirdly, the United Nations must continue to play a leading role in the development of international cybernorms, given its status as the only universal and inclusive forum for addressing such issues. Member States should redouble their efforts to implement the 11 voluntary, non-binding norms, which together with international law and confidence-building measures constitute the cyberstability framework for responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communications technologies. Singapore is honoured to contribute to that effort through its role in chairing the Open-Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021–2025. We were heartened by the consensus adoption of the Open-Ended Working Group's first annual progress report at its third substantive session in July and hope that all Member States will continue to build on that foundation in order to make further progress at the Group's subsequent sessions.

We welcome the agreement on establishing a global inter-governmental points-of-contact directory in the information and communications technologies domain. In August, Singapore also organized the inaugural United Nations-Singapore Cyber Fellowship Programme for capacity-building in Singapore to equip senior officials from around the world with the interdisciplinary expertise required to effectively oversee national cyber and digital security policy, strategy and operations. That is our small contribution towards our common goal of an open, secure, stable and interoperable cyberspace.

Fourthly, Singapore reiterates its commitment to the use of outer space for peaceful purposes and the centrality of international law in governing all activities in the exploration and use of outer space. We welcome all efforts to ensure the security and sustainability of those global commons. We also look forward to the joint panel discussion on 27 October of the First and Fourth Committees, on possible challenges to space security and sustainability.

Singapore looks forward to working with you, Sir, and all Member States to achieve a successful outcome at the First Committee.

Mr. Sinka (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election to chair the First Committee. My congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. And I want to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation for the success of the Committee's work.

Burkina Faso endorses the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/77/PV.2).

This meeting provides another opportunity to review progress made in international peace and security. Our work is taking place in a context characterized by many uncertainties in various areas, including international peace and security. Our concerns about the existence of nuclear weapons and the desire to acquire and modernize them are legitimate. It is important to remember that nuclear weapons constitute a real threat to all of us in several ways, which is why we must strengthen our efforts to rid the world of such weapons, which have the potential to produce disastrous consequences at various levels. In that regard, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which my country signed on 22 September, represent a significant step forward. Burkina Faso once again reaffirms its firm commitment to the NPT as a key instrument for preserving world peace and security. We believe it is crucial that the its provisions and the obligations arising from them be respected by all States parties.

My delegation welcomed the fact that after several postponements the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was held in August, enabling its States parties to engage in sincere dialogue. In view of its mixed results, however, our shared responsibility demands that we work relentlessly for the NPT's effective implementation. The world has no choice. The risks and dangers associated with nuclear weapons compel us to do so. With regard to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, for which the first meeting of States parties was held from 21 to 23 June, my delegation hopes that the Treaty will make a major contribution to the achievement of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

An end to nuclear testing in all its forms represents a critical step towards achieving nuclear non-proliferation. It is therefore regrettable that more than two decades after its adoption in 1996, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is not yet in force. It is the responsibility of all countries to see it through, in particular the annex 2 States, whose ratification is critical to the Treaty's entry into force. My country urges them to join the ongoing efforts.

Furthermore, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones remains relevant to our global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Such zones already in place in various regions of the world undeniably contribute to strengthening the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. With regard to other weapons of mass destruction, my delegation reaffirms the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention.

My delegation welcomed the outcome of the 2022 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, held in April. It underscores the importance not only of preserving the Commission but of achieving its deliberative objectives in order to advance disarmament and non-proliferation at the global level. The universalization of the Oslo and Ottawa Conventions also remains vital in view of the multiple consequences of the use of cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a deep source of concern for Burkina Faso and all Sahel-Saharan States, as those weapons are the primary drivers of threats to peace, security and stability in Africa, particularly West Africa. Even if they are not the direct cause of crises and conflicts, they fuel and sustain them. Accordingly, in an environment characterized by terrorism and transnational organized crime, small arms and light weapons fuel armed violence and undermine the socioeconomic development of our States. The fight against trafficking in small arms and light weapons should therefore involve the entire international community through a strong commitment to regulating the trade in such weapons. That is why my delegation welcomed the outcome of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We also welcomed the decision to establish a permanent specialized training programme on small arms and light weapons in order to strengthen technical knowledge and expertise in areas related to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, especially in developing countries.

Burkina Faso firmly believes in multilateralism as a framework for negotiations on disarmament issues. However, we regret the fact that despite the commonly held belief in the existence of these threats, States are struggling to overcome their differing points of view

and to improve their relations with one another through a framework of commitment, flexibility and openness in order to overcome our many challenges, which include the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction, the exponential increase in military expenditures, the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons, the arms race in outer space, new advances in cyberattacks and the use of autonomous lethal weapons.

Burkina Faso will continue to do its part in the process of bringing peace to our world by contributing substantively to the collective effort to bring about a more secure world that respects our international legal frameworks. That is why we will spare no effort in promoting peace and security instruments at the regional and international levels.

In a constantly changing world in which we face various and multiple challenges, we must continue our efforts to consolidate the gains we have made and make further progress. Burkina Faso calls on the entire international community to work for global and complete disarmament. The dangers threatening our planet in the event of war or nuclear accident are real. In view of such threats, it is vital to prioritize our security and collective welfare through both our words and our actions. It is incumbent on all nations to pass on to future generations a better world over which the sword of Damocles will no longer hang.

Mr. Masmejean (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Mr. Chair, we would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. We would also like to express, Sir, our delegation's full support in your efforts to fulfil your mandate.

We are meeting this year in a severely deteriorated international security environment. The major trend it evidences, which has been under way for some time, is the result, in particular, of intensified competition between major Powers and the acceleration of technological progress leading to the development of new types of weapons. This trend has been greatly accentuated by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, which we condemn in the strongest terms.

Recent developments have contributed to the increase of a number of risks and dangers to global security. This is particularly true of nuclear weapons, given the existential risks they pose to humanity. The threats of a possible use of this type of weapon by Russia and the raising of the level of alert related to

their use in recent months are a particularly worrying development. Switzerland is also concerned about the increased use of cyberoperations in the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine.

Furthermore, the deteriorating international environment has major implications for the global arms-control and disarmament architecture. Many rules are being eroded. Illicit weapons are being used, while others are being used illegally.

In recent years, important disarmament instruments have been terminated. Others are now being called into question or exploited for political purposes. This concerns the area of chemical and biological weapons, in particular.

Finally, reaching an agreement within the framework of multilateral processes is proving to be particularly difficult, as the consensus rule is regularly misused as a veto. We saw this at the tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), but it also applies to other instruments and issues. For example, the majority of stakeholders in the ongoing discussions on lethal autonomous weapons systems seem to agree on key aspects that should underpin a normative and operational framework for such weapons, but this progress could not move forward due to the objection of one or more of the contracting parties.

The deteriorating security environment characterizing the current international situation requires work on multiple fronts. Without wishing to be exhaustive, I will take up the following five aspects.

First, we need to focus on risks that have grown significantly in recent years and months and that constitute an existential danger, most notably, the nuclear danger. Addressing such risks is urgently needed to prevent a possible large-scale humanitarian disaster. Doing so will also build the confidence that is essential to returning to the disarmament path and to making progress in such areas as non-proliferation.

Secondly, we must pay particular attention to strict compliance with international law, including its most fundamental rules. That includes, of course, respect for the rules relating to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States Members of the United Nations and to the prohibition on the use of force. Violation of these rules is a matter of deep concern, and measures must be taken to put an end to it. Strict compliance with international humanitarian law is equally important. In

this context, we welcome the recent finalization of work on a political declaration on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Thirdly, building on existing instruments and working towards their full implementation is necessary. We regret that the tenth NPT Review Conference was unable to agree on a final document. In this context, we would like to emphasize that the commitments made at previous Review Conferences remain fully relevant and valid, and that those that have not yet been fulfilled must still be implemented. We hope that the upcoming review cycle will show progress in this regard.

Fourthly, the tensions surrounding existing disarmament regimes must lead us to take advantage of the opportunities to strengthen them. The upcoming Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Conference (BWC) is an important opportunity in this regard. Efforts should be made to ensure that the BWC is able to meet the challenges it faces, including those posed by the rapid developments taking place in the field of biotechnology.

Finally, developing new responses, even new standards, to the challenges that have arisen in recent times must also be a priority. In this context, we would like to welcome the intensification of the work on space security, in particular that of the open-ended working group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. Progress is also necessary and, in our view, possible, in the field of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

In the cyberdomain, we welcome the adoption by consensus of the progress report of the open-ended working group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies. This report contains important proposals for further work on the application of international law, including international humanitarian law, and the implementation of voluntary norms on responsible State conduct in cyberspace.

In conclusion, we hope that the First Committee will contribute to the common efforts needed to mitigate the risks to global security and to strengthen it, reversing the trend in the direction of an arms race back towards disarmament. Switzerland will commit itself to this not only in the work of the First Committee but also in its work as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2023–2024, particularly in relation to its priorities of building sustainable peace and protecting civilian populations.

Mr. Göbel (Germany): At the outset, Mr. Chair, I would like to congratulate you on your election to chair the First Committee at its seventy-seventh session. I can assure you, Sir, of the full support of my delegation.

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union in its capacity as observer.

Like many other States, we are disappointed that the tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was concluded without adopting a final outcome document. After four weeks of constructive discussions and substantial progress on important aspects of the NPT, Russia decided to veto a consensus outcome despite all other States parties' readiness to adopt the draft. While this is the result on paper, we should not ignore the fact that all but one State Party to the NPT was ready to politically support the draft Final Document. We will therefore build on that as we move towards the next review cycle. For over 50 years, the NPT has helped to preserve peace and create a more stable global order. In the current strategic and political circumstances, in particular, we need to reaffirm the commitments made under the Treaty and make progress in their implementation.

Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine carries a profoundly disturbing global dimension. By making nuclear threats, spreading fake news in the area of biological and chemical weapons and displaying confrontational behaviour, Russia is undercutting or violating all relevant international agreements pertaining to weapons of mass destruction. The nuclear threats that Russia repeated just recently, to our great concern, also squarely contradict Russia's commitment to the declaration made earlier this year by the leaders of all five nuclear-weapon States that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

The Review Conference is now behind us, but the task ahead is the same. We have to reduce the risk of nuclear escalation. Our task is to come up with concrete practical steps, and Germany will continue to advance ideas jointly with partners, especially on transparency, risk reduction and nuclear disarmament verification. The renewal of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in 2021 for a further five years was a positive development. We are encouraged that Russia and the United States are committed to the full implementation of the Treaty and to pursuing a follow-up agreement.

Twenty-six years after the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was opened for signature, it has yet to enter into force. We welcome all the new members and reiterate our call to all States that have not yet signed and ratified the CTBT to do so without delay. With regard to a fissile material cut-off treaty, we have been biding our time for far too long. Differences on certain aspects must no longer serve as a pretext for not moving forward. Non-nuclear- and nuclear-weapon states can work together very effectively. Nuclear disarmament verification is a case in point. In 2022, Germany and France successfully conducted a second exercise simulating the dismantlement of a nuclear warhead.

North Korea's continuing development of its illegal nuclear weapons programme and ballistic-missile arsenal remains a most serious proliferation concern. The unprecedented series of missile tests that it conducted this year is a blatant violation of Security Council resolutions and must be met with unity and resolve.

Germany remains fully committed to the implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). We strongly urge Iran to reverse all nuclear activities that are inconsistent with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Iran is obliged by law to clarify and resolve the open NPT safeguards issues. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system is a fundamental component of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Comprehensive safeguards agreements, along with additional protocols, constitute the current IAEA verification standard, and we strongly support the universalization of that standard.

This year the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. The use of chemical weapons in Syria, as well as of internationally banned nerve agents such as those used in the cases of Mr. Skripal and Mr. Navalny, are flagrant violations of international law. We applaud the sustained efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to investigate the use of chemical weapons and to fight impunity. We call on Syria to fully comply with its obligations under the CWC, and on Russia to come clean with regard to Mr. Navalny.

The German presidency of the Group of Seven-led Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction has put an emphasis

on biological security. Today, on 7 October, we are pleased to be hosting in Berlin a Global Partnership Conference on Current Biosecurity Challenges. In this regard, the international community must renew its efforts to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). We condemn in the strongest terms the disinformation campaign by the Russian Federation targeting cooperation among States parties in compliance with article X of the BWC. We highlight the importance of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons and underscore the need to properly resource, equip and operationalize it.

Emerging and disruptive technologies affect international security every day. On the one hand they create new opportunities, but at the same time, their use poses challenges to the existing political, ethical, legal and operational framework. Germany believes that developing norms, rules and principles for responsible use and responsible behaviours contributes to preventing escalation and building transparency and confidence among States.

Germany remains strongly committed to the peaceful use of outer space and welcomes the establishment of an Open-Ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms of responsible behaviours. One of the most harmful behaviours in outer space is the destructive testing of direct-ascent anti-satellite missiles. Germany is committed to refraining from conducting such testing and calls on all States to support the relevant draft resolution proposed by the United States this year.

Malicious cyberactivities represent an increasing threat to peace and stability in cyberspace. Over the past month, the world has witnessed how Russia is waging a series of cyberattacks alongside its physical war of aggression on Ukraine, thereby committing a flagrant breach of international law and of the United Nations framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace. While actively engaged within the Open-Ended Working Group discussions, as a sponsor of a programme of action Germany supports ongoing discussions about the establishment of such a programme.

Germany remains gravely concerned about the serious threats to international peace and security through the illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. We are

honoured to chair the Open-Ended Working Group on conventional ammunition established to elaborate a new global framework for addressing existing gaps in through-life ammunition management.

Germany welcomed the finalization of the political declaration on explosive weapons in populated areas and is committed to actively engaging in the follow-up process to mitigate the humanitarian consequences arising from the use of such weapons. We strongly call for an outcome of the Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in mid-November, which will enable the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems to intensify its work.

The recent eighth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty was successfully held under Germany's presidency. We believe that it is an effective tool and confidence-building measure for fighting the illicit trade in conventional arms and preventing their diversion.

In conclusion, the past year has shaken the international arms-control architecture in many ways and has seriously damaged confidence. As we continue to deal with the effects of the war in Ukraine, we must be clear that ultimately, disarmament and arms control, as a complement to the current focus on defence, are more essential than ever to opening up ways out of escalation and back to peace.

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): First of all, let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, on assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee, and assuring you of the full support of our delegation throughout your mandate.

Slovakia fully associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/77/PV.2).

I will now add some remarks in my national capacity. The full version of the statement will be posted online.

The international security environment and security architecture in Europe have been significantly degraded by the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. That aggression is a blatant violation of international law, notably the Charter of the United Nations, and Slovakia condemns it in the strongest terms, along with the involvement of the neighbouring country of Belarus. We strongly

condemn the Russian Federation's illegal annexation of parts of Ukraine's territory, based on the falsified outcomes of pseudo-referendums that the Russian Federation organized at gunpoint on occupied Ukrainian territory. We unequivocally reject those actions and will not recognize them. Slovakia supports the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Russia's forces are using all categories of conventional weapons in Ukraine, and very often in a manner that does not comply with international humanitarian law. Their actions are inflicting unspeakable suffering on innocent civilians, including children, destroying civilian objects and infrastructure and causing gross violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. Moreover, Russia's actions and illegal annexation pose serious and direct threats to the safety and security of Ukrainian nuclear facilities and further aggravate the nuclear safety and security situation at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. We urge the Russian Federation to immediately cease all actions against and at the power plant and to allow the competent Ukrainian authorities to regain full control thereof.

When international order is under such enormous pressure and when existing norms, rules and principles of international law are violated, prospects for progress in disarmament and non-proliferation become bleak. Previous positive developments — such as the extension of the New START Treaty, the Strategic Stability Dialogue between the United States of America and the Russian Federation and the joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races — are now, unfortunately, overshadowed by the Russian aggression in Ukraine. During the war, the Russian Federation has decided to increase the readiness of its nuclear forces and continued to use dangerous and escalatory nuclear rhetoric. Those actions directly contradict the joint statement of January that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Despite those pessimistic prospects, it is nevertheless necessary to continue efforts with regard to future verifiable nuclear arms control arrangements. Under current circumstances, the issue of strategic and nuclear risk reduction has also become highly important. We need to make every effort to revitalize disarmament and non-proliferation.

We regret the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in August failed to achieve

consensus on the final document at. Despite that setback, we are not utterly pessimistic. The fact that only one delegation blocked the consensus outcome means that the remaining States parties are willing to work constructively for the sake of upholding and strengthening the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Slovakia remains strongly committed to the NPT. Legally binding obligations enshrined in the Treaty and commitments from the past Review Conferences remain valid, and we need to implement and build on them during the new review cycle.

Slovakia supports a progressive, step-by-step approach to promoting nuclear disarmament that takes into account the prevailing security environment. The early entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) should be our common objective. We call on all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the CTBT.

We support the early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of the Shannon mandate. Until the conclusion of such a treaty, all States concerned should declare a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices.

Slovakia also welcomes various initiatives that, in a pragmatic manner, promote dialogue on how to advance nuclear disarmament and facilitate implementation of the goals of the NPT, such as the Stockholm Initiative, the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative and the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative.

The nuclear and ballistic missile programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a serious threat to international peace and security. We are deeply concerned by the continued launches of ballistic missiles in unprecedented numbers since the beginning of this year, as well as the announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its updated law on nuclear policy, specifying conditions for the use of nuclear weapons.

Slovakia supports the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as an important element providing us with guarantees about the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. We are concerned by Iran's continued actions that are inconsistent with the JCPOA. Nevertheless, we still hope that intensive diplomatic efforts within the JCPOA Joint Commission

could form the basis for revitalizing the JCPOA. We also call on Iran to engage constructively with the IAEA on outstanding safeguards issues, as comprehensive safeguard agreements are legally binding.

Slovakia strongly supports the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Any use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstance is unacceptable. Since the beginning of the aggression against Ukraine, the Russian Federation has disseminated disinformation concerning the CWC regime when accusing Ukraine of violations of its provisions. Its military campaign has exposed many Ukrainians to toxic chemicals as a consequence of shelling of Ukrainian civil industrial infrastructure. We also recall that the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny on Russian soil in August 2020 is still not resolved.

Slovakia reaffirms its strong support for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and is fully committed to contributing to the success of the forthcoming ninth Review Conference. We are convinced that, at the consultative meeting pursuant to article V of the BWC, it was credibly demonstrated to States parties that the United States and Ukraine cooperation and assistance have been for legitimate peaceful purposes and are in accordance with article X, and that Russian claims were unjustified. Hence, in our view there are no outstanding issues left and BWC State parties should now constructively focus on the ninth Review Conference.

As regards the outer space domain, Slovakia is committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment. We support the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours.

We are concerned by the continued development and testing of anti-satellite weapons, including the risks associated with those weapons. We welcome the initiative and commitment of the United States not to conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests and the joining of other States. We would be willing to support a universal norm in that regard.

Slovakia supports a free, open, stable and secure cyberspace where human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are observed. We support the proposal for a programme of action to advance responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, as well as the proposed First Committee draft resolution.

The First Committee's deliberations this year are being held in very difficult times. Nevertheless, let me express hope that the First Committee, under your able leadership, Mr. Chair, will serve the needs of the international community for the sake of disarmament, peace and security.

Mrs. González (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that Uruguay is taking the floor in the First Committee at this session, we wish to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your election. My delegation wishes you every success. You may rest assured that you can count on the full support of my delegation to make your chairmanship a success.

With regard to disarmament and non-proliferation, Uruguay, as a State that does not possess nuclear weapons, remains committed to strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We support multilateralism in furtherance of universal and complete disarmament, under strict adherence to the international regime created for that purpose. Now, when the threat of use of nuclear weapons exists and endangers international peace and security, we therefore recall that the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons constitute a crime against humanity and a serious violation of international law, humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. States must seek peace through peaceful means and take a seat at the negotiating table. There are no winners, either in the short or in the long term, in the theatres of conventional and/or nuclear conflicts and all nations will be affected by their negative consequences. It is therefore the responsibility of those of us representing States Members of the Organization to promote and work for world peace, which is a strong basis for achieving any objective of the United Nations system.

We recognize the importance of implementing the three fundamental pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT): nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Regarding the third pillar, we must reflect on the fact that the use of nuclear energy can be used to confront such current challenges as climate change and to promote sustainable development. In that regard, Uruguay wishes to express its support for the role and independent work of the International Atomic Energy Agency. At the regional level, we also highlight the work of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We regret the outcome of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT and urge the great Powers to pursue negotiations. As previously mentioned, better understanding is imperative in a complex international context in which most countries depend on each other in the area of international security. We emphasize that the lack of consensus regarding the final document does not mean that the States parties should not meet the commitments and responsibilities they have assumed, including at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences.

In contrast, Uruguay welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the holding of its first Review Conference of States Parties that have ratified this international instrument. It is a nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation milestone, as well as a significant commitment in the aforementioned search for international peace and security.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, or Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first zone free of nuclear weapons in a densely populated territory and which was a source of inspiration for the establishment of such zones at the international level. We will once again co-sponsor an updated draft resolution on the matter.

My country wishes to emphasize once again the decisive importance of the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It therefore urges the States listed annex 2 of the CTBT to ratify it promptly with a view to its full entry into force. Likewise, Uruguay urges all States of the international community to maintain their moratorium on carrying out nuclear tests or tests of other explosive devices of that nature. In that regard, my country has joined the Friends of the CTBT group and endorsed the joint statement that was made at its recent tenth meeting, which took place in New York.

Uruguay takes this opportunity to highlight once again the importance of preventing the proliferation of conventional weapons. Conventional weapons are true weapons of mass destruction in conflict zones. Their trafficking and trade to warring parties in armed conflicts directly contribute to the suffering and death of civilians. Their diversion affects my country and its region. In that vein, my country reaffirms its

commitment to the Arms Trade Treaty and considers it the fundamental basis for the international regulation of the international arms trade, including small arms and light weapons, their parts and components, as well as ammunition.

My delegation underlines the importance of last year's resumption of meetings of the First Committee following the peak of the global pandemic crisis. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the holding of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group to elaborate a set of political commitments as a new global framework that will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management. We welcome the Group's work and the framework document it is developing. We hope that the Group will eventually also take into account the concerns expressed by various countries in my region. It is our understanding that the existing global and regional frameworks are insufficient to address the life-cycle management of ammunition and that there is no regulatory framework that enjoys universal acceptance. Existing frameworks generally focus on limited aspects. Therefore, we reiterate that the open and inclusive format of the Open-Ended Working Group provides an excellent opportunity to advance a set of political commitments as a universal framework.

My country also supports a comprehensive approach that includes the life-cycle management of conventional ammunition and takes into account the interrelationship and feedback among perspectives. Proper regulation of small arms and light weapons ammunition is essential. We recall that small arms and light weapons ammunition pose a minimal risk of explosion, but there is great potential for diversion, given their poor traceability.

We highlight the need to assist and cooperate with those countries that request it, with a view to reducing the technological gap in arsenal security, preventing their diversion and guaranteeing their sustainability. National capacity-building in that area has an impact on the protection and security of all, and we therefore request the support of the delegations that are working on draft resolutions on this topic. For the aforementioned reasons, we are also of the view that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in

All Its Aspects, as well as the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, are instruments of vital international importance to making progress in the fight against illicit trafficking in these weapons.

Uruguay advocates a free, fair and safe cyberspace. We therefore underline the importance of cybersecurity in our national and regional agendas, as well as in the United Nations agenda, and we support the work of the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021-2025, which undoubtedly constitutes the strengthening of multilateralism in this area. We welcome the Group's first annual progress report (A/77/275).

Finally, we underline the importance of gender equality in disarmament-related matters. In that regard, we support any initiative that promotes this goal within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the women and peace and security agenda. Intensive work is required for improvement in this area, as we consider this question to be of cross-cutting importance to the work of the Organization, and we pledge our commitment to it. As colleagues who have spoken before have me pointed out, greater awareness must translate into an effective and thoughtful inclusion of gender, which prompts action.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to sincerely congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on presiding over the work of the First Committee. We are fully confident that you will lead its work successfully. Allow me also to extend my thanks to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of the sisterly Kingdom of Morocco, Ambassador Omar Hilale, on for his efforts in successfully managing the Committee's work at the previous session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the sisterly Republic of Iraq, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and by the representative of the Republic of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.2).

The work of the First Committee is especially important as the Committee is an international forum that allows members to reach consensus on issues related to disarmament in order to maintain international and regional peace and security. Conflicts, tensions and terrorist threats continue to grow throughout the world

as terrorist groups continue to access various types of weapons, including weapons of mass destruction. The Kingdom of Bahrain supports the great and important role played by the United Nations through its specialized organs and agencies on disarmament issues.

The Kingdom of Bahrain attaches particular importance to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a cornerstone of our international efforts to promote nuclear disarmament, prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and strengthen cooperation to ensure the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In that context, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its steadfast position in favour of the elimination of nuclear weapons as the only way to ensure the non-use of such weapons. We stress the importance of enhancing cooperation with the international community and relevant parties to stop the proliferation of those weapons. We also emphasize the right of Member States to fully benefit from the latest developments in nuclear energy for peaceful purposes while implementing nuclear safety and security guarantees.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the importance of implementing the 1995 NPT Review Conference resolution contained in the annex to document NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destructions in the Middle East. The resolution is part and parcel of the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

I note in that context the outcomes of the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, under the distinctive chairmanship of the sisterly State of Kuwait, in line with decision 73/546. We look forward to effectively participating in the third session of the Conference in November, under the chairmanship of the Lebanese Republic. In that regard, the Kingdom of Bahrain calls on the Islamic Republic of Iran to fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency to ensure that the Middle East, including the Arab Gulf, is free of weapons of mass destruction.

The enormous developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital transformation require us as Member States to attach special importance to cybersecurity in order to ensure the non-targeting of the achievements of States and peoples. From that standpoint, the Kingdom of Bahrain

notes the importance of the reports by the Group of Governmental Expert on advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security and the role of the Open-Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021-2025 in reaching an international consensus on the most prominent issues related to cybersecurity.

At the national level, the Kingdom of Bahrain has established a clear system for the governance of cybersecurity. Within the Ministry of the Interior, we have created the General Directorate of Anti-corruption and Economic and Electronic Security, as well as the National Cybersecurity Centre to protect our Kingdom's ICT infrastructure.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms that outer space is a common space for humankind and that it should be used for peaceful purposes and prevented from being subject to an arms race.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its full commitment to coordinating and working with relevant United Nations organs and Member States to achieve progress on all issues related to disarmament and international security.

Mrs. González López (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, the delegation of El Salvador wishes to offer its most sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chair, and all the other members of the Bureau for your election to lead the work of the First Committee at this session of the General Assembly. You can count on the strong support of my delegation.

The challenges and threats facing the United Nations and all its Member States are diverse and highly complex.

Complete, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament continues to be one of the Organization's outstanding issues. The world remains under the threat posed by more than 13,000 nuclear weapons, many on alert and ready to be detonated at any moment. The unfortunate outcome of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a sign that our international disarmament and non-proliferation regime is in danger. These are perhaps the biggest and most pressing circumstances that the world has faced since the end of the Cold War. That has led my country to point out that the serious humanitarian consequences of nuclear

weapons use are a fundamental argument in favour of their complete elimination. My delegation will continue working to achieve that objective, which I am sure is shared by a large number of States represented here.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, to which El Salvador is party. We are extremely pleased to know that Latin America and the Caribbean, a nuclear-weapon-free region of more than 640 million inhabitants, has ratified the Treaty in its entirety. This is a symbol of our regional tradition of being at the forefront of international disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. However, 25 years is a long time, and we believe that the entry into force of the Treaty should not be further delayed.

Regarding other weapons of mass destruction, we reiterate our concern about the threats to use chemical and biological weapons prohibited by international law and international humanitarian law. Most disturbing is the threat of use of these types of weapons by non-State actors. For that reason, it is essential to redouble our joint efforts for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). In that regard, we reaffirm our commitment to the full application of the regimes for the control and non-proliferation of chemical and biological weapons, the uses of which are indiscriminate. In that sense, we hope to achieve successful and concrete results at the ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, with a view to strengthening our work in the effective application of that international instrument.

With regard to chemical weapons specifically, we reiterate my country's support for the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to guarantee that the use of chemical substances is solely for peaceful purposes, preventing any mishandling that may lead to the creation of toxic weapons. We understand that controls to prevent a resurgence in the use of this type of agent begin at the national level, so El Salvador is pleased to be part of a group of countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that will strengthen their national legislation to comply with all the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

My delegation also wishes to highlight important events, such as the holding of the first Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in Vienna. That culminated in the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme

of Action, which establishes a progressive path for the implementation of the Treaty and joint steps that will allow us to move towards the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. In the view of a non-nuclear-weapon State like El Salvador, the TPNW contributes to the implementation of article VI of the NPT and under no circumstances seeks to undermine the latter. On the contrary, as its name indicates, the TPNW seeks the prohibition of those weapons due to their serious humanitarian impacts and the terrible consequences that their use would have. It is therefore a dynamic contribution to the current nuclear disarmament regime that seeks to complement and reinforce the NPT in the effort to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. We especially welcome the fact that the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW will be held next year in New York City.

Given the emergence of growing threats in cyberspace, we condemn actions aimed at destabilizing or paralysing the operation of critical State infrastructure and State information infrastructure, as well as the integrity and stability of the Internet. Such actions, due to their serious repercussions in key sectors such as health, public finances and social security, are attacks on sovereignty, violate international law and affect the provision of essential public services, directly affecting our populations. The malicious use of information and communication technologies by non-State agents is a cause of serious concern to us and, in that vein, we encourage the broad exchange of opinions on the norms, rules and principles of State behaviours in cyberspace, which by nature are subject to constant evolution. Emerging technologies have great potential to boost the economic development of developing countries, but they generate other vulnerabilities, which is why building resilience in cybersecurity should be a priority for everyone. El Salvador's cybersecurity policy was adopted recently, and we should mention that it is an important advance in terms of the national implementation of the voluntary regulatory framework for the responsible State behaviours in cyberspace that we promote here at the United Nations.

El Salvador welcomes the adoption by consensus of the final document of the Biennial Meeting of States on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. My country was a member of the Bureau of the Meeting and worked hard, alongside the delegation of Thailand,

to facilitate references to a gender mainstreaming approach in that important document. For my country, it is worrying that, given the serious threats they pose to the civilian population and after long years of debates on lethal autonomous weapons systems, there is still no comprehensive regulatory framework for restrictions on the use of that type of weapons technology. To make progress in this area, during the last meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems, a group of 11 countries, including El Salvador, presented a proposal for a protocol within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, suggesting a series of prohibitions and regulations in the matter that could serve as a basis for future discussions and facilitate the achievement of concrete results as soon as possible.

In conclusion, El Salvador reaffirms the importance of the full, equitable, meaningful and effective participation of women in discussions and decision-making processes in disarmament forums. A cross-cutting gender approach will help us to better understand the roles that women and men play in various spheres of disarmament and how they can constructively cooperate on an issue that affects the security of all. Along the same lines, it is essential that all delegations continue to work for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

The complete version of this statement has been published for official purposes.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): On behalf of the delegation of Guyana, I congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to lead the First Committee during its seventy-seventh session. We are confident that the Bureau will ably lead the Committee in the discharge of its mandate and we assure you of our full support and cooperation.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the Bahamas, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.2), and makes the following additional points in its national capacity.

The international community today is faced with numerous interlocking challenges and crises. Their increasingly complex and interconnected nature demands that we harness the power of collective action to realize our common objective of promoting international peace and security. Those challenges are

further exacerbated by recent threats to nuclear security. My delegation maintains that nuclear weapons have no place in our world and that their use and threat of use are contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations and to the spirit of the Charter. We reiterate our call for the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons and underscore our country's full support for the universalization and effective implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The TPNW is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons and is one of the strongest tools we have to ensure their total elimination.

My delegation also welcomes the convening of the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW in June and the momentum that it generated towards the goal of nuclear disarmament. The Vienna Declaration and Action Plan adopted at the Meeting have paved the way for the operationalization and implementation of the Treaty and reaffirmed the TPNW's complementarity with the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We therefore urge all States that have not yet done so to ratify the TPNW, which will assist in putting an end to the regression on nuclear disarmament.

Furthermore, we continue to call on annex 2 States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to ensure its entry into force. As members of this global community, we each have a duty and obligation to ensure that progress is maintained towards the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Nuclear deterrence is not a viable option. The total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons is the best hope that we have for a secure future. Guyana therefore emphasizes the need for all nuclear-weapon States to urgently comply with their legal obligations and to fulfil commitments undertaken on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We urge those reneging on their multilateral commitments to return to the path of disarmament and to recommit to peace, diplomacy and cooperation as the only means of overcoming security risks and conflicts.

Equally concerning to my delegation is the continued proliferation of illegal arms and ammunition, which threatens peace, safety, security and stability in our region. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to have devastating impacts globally on socioeconomic development, human rights and human development and must be stopped.

We maintain that a comprehensive and multisectoral approach is needed to combat that scourge and are supportive of efforts to effect change through education, advocacy and capacity-building. In that regard, we reiterate our support for the establishment of a standing dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons and look forward to collaborating with Member States to enhance the full and effective participation of women and youth in those initiatives, including within the framework of the Arms Trade Treaty, the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects, and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Guyana subscribes to the view that women and youth have important contributions to make to disarmament processes. We welcome recent initiatives aimed at promoting the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation of women in decision-making and implementation processes and urge Member States to keep that momentum by also supporting the draft resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control (A/C.1/77/L.18), introduced at this session by Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of CARICOM.

On cybersecurity, my delegation places great value on the benefits of information and communication technologies (ICTs) but remains deeply concerned about the increased incidence of cyberattacks against critical infrastructure. We reaffirm the applicability of international law in that domain and will continue to support all efforts to operationalize and strengthen international norms on cybersecurity.

The magnitude and complexity of global security challenges cannot be overstated. As you rightly said in your statement, Mr. Chair (see A/C.1/77/PV.2), the current security environment is fraught with new challenges caused by Power politics, increased asymmetric and hybrid warfare and new forms of threats from non-State actors. Growing tension and suspicion among States are also fuelled by great Power competition and insecurity and have diminished trust and goodwill.

Still, all is not lost. So long as there is life there is hope. We still have an opportunity to change course. We must reassess our approach to disarmament and devise new strategies to bolster cooperation and enhance

the effectiveness of the United Nations disarmament machinery. Guyana is prepared to do its part. We are prepared to work with all Member States, during the current session and beyond, to rebuild trust and to chart a new course for general and complete disarmament. In that regard, we echo the call made by the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu (see A/C.1/77/PV.2), for all States to intensify their commitment to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control through meaningful, inclusive and participatory approaches. Only by working together can we effectively build the future we want and further the cause of global peace and security.

Mr. Vorshilov (Mongolia): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your appointment as Chair of the First Committee. My delegation also congratulates the other members of the Bureau on their election. You can count my delegation's our full support and cooperation.

Mongolia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.2).

In this difficult geopolitical environment, the work of the First Committee is even more critical in seeking solutions to international security challenges. I reconfirm Mongolia's full commitment to nuclear disarmament, the maintenance of international peace and security and the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, as well as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and the three pillars of the NPT should be implemented in a balanced, transparent and comprehensive manner. It is regrettable that the States parties were unable to adopt a consensual outcome document at the tenth NPT Review Conference, despite four weeks of substantive deliberations and discussions. The final document would have been a crucial contribution to the full implementation of the NPT. Therefore, we need to work together to renew and intensify our efforts towards achieving the greater goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is instrumental in achieving the objectives of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The Treaty's entry into force in January 2021 set a milestone in

the international efforts to ban those weapons. In that regard, we welcome the adoption by consensus of the Declaration and Action Plan at the first Meeting of the States Parties to the TPNW, which was held last June in Vienna. We are confident that those documents will enhance the implementation of the Treaty's objective of achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Conference on Disarmament concluded this year's session after adopting an annual report to the General Assembly. However, as the Conference is the world's only multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations, greater efforts should be made to achieve much-needed tangible and constructive results.

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status. Since 1998, the General Assembly has been considering the issue of Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status and has adopted resolutions on the subject biennially. I wish to take this opportunity to inform the Committee that our delegation will submit at this year's session of the First Committee a draft resolution entitled "Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon free status" (A/C.1/77/L.19). Both nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia's internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free status continue to contribute to achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It is therefore our hope that, as in previous years, the draft resolution will be adopted with unanimous support.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Mongolia's readiness to work with all Member States to achieve our common goals. We hope that the Committee will demonstrate the necessary political will to address critical issues on its agenda. We wish the First Committee every success in its work this year.

Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor in this Committee, may I begin by warmly congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election and commend you for the excellent manner in which you have been conducting our deliberations. The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago commits to working with you towards a successful conclusion.

Trinidad and Tobago aligns itself with the statement already delivered by my colleague, the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas, on behalf of the Caribbean Community, and by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/77/PV.2).

The First Committee is conducting its imperative deliberations at the height of one of the most perilous moments in world history. The international community has witnessed with horror one country loudly issue nuclear threats, just within the last few days, to deter other States from intervening in an ongoing, large-scale, unprovoked war of aggression against a sovereign State. For Trinidad and Tobago, such posture by a nuclear-weapon State is profoundly unjust and disappointing. The international community should not tolerate a scenario in which any nuclear-armed State can issue a threat to use nuclear weapons with impunity, when such threat directly contravenes the Charter of the United Nations. The international security system simply cannot work in that way.

It is supremely illogical that any State would eagerly court mutually assured destruction, which is inescapable with the use of nuclear weapons, where both combatants and several hundred million beyond the theatre of war will be annihilated; where our ecosystems and food supplies will be permanently destroyed; and where, to the extent that they exist at all, survivors will face untold suffering and misery. Unless that apocalyptic scenario is the goal itself, we reiterate our call for genuine commitments of responsible conduct by all nuclear-weapon States, and more specifically for the prompt lowering of the rhetoric in the European theatre of conflict.

We also note with concern the escalation of tensions in the Korean peninsula, which has led to the ratcheting up of sabre-rattling in that region. Trinidad and Tobago therefore calls for an immediate de-escalation of further destabilizing acts of aggression in the region.

Trinidad and Tobago celebrates the fact that it belongs to a region that established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, pursuant to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. We have maintained a long-standing commitment both to disarmament and to the global non-proliferation regime — a posture we have consistently articulated at several forums in our 60 years of loyal membership of the Organization.

Trinidad and Tobago actively participated in the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in Vienna earlier this year, out of which emerged the Vienna Declaration and Action Plan. Trinidad and Tobago regards the TPNW as a decisive, progressive step towards ridding the world of the ominous threat of

nuclear confrontation, whether by calculation or by error. Trinidad and Tobago therefore calls on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

I address the Committee today with an overwhelming sense of despair about the devastating and deadly impact of the illegal trade in arms and ammunition on the daily lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the people of the Caribbean Community and, indeed, many other persons in every region of the world. The accessibility of illegal firearms has resulted in an increased number of highly organized criminal gangs and the development of a subculture that promotes violence, which pose severe security, safety and socioeconomic challenges.

Faced with those gruesome consequences, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has been obliged to divert scarce resources from the national development budget in its bid to suppress the far-reaching effects of the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. It is against that deeply worrying backdrop that the Caribbean Community, including Trinidad and Tobago, has been advocating for many years the need for strong and effective multilateral action to tackle that major problem.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore reiterates the importance we place on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons as important frameworks in mobilizing international cooperation to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In so doing, we welcomed the adoption of the consensus outcome document of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States. Furthermore, it remains a matter of great contentment to us that the outcome document upheld recognition of the linkages between small arms and gender perspectives.

Trinidad and Tobago has consistently stated that any discourse on small arms and light weapons is deficient without admission of the issue of ammunition. In that context, we welcome the ongoing work of the Open-ended Working Group on conventional ammunition and look forward to the report on its work to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session.

Trinidad and Tobago remains firm in its conviction that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) can contribute significantly to reducing the suffering of many of our citizens around the world, especially women and children, who live daily under the deadly and devastating impact of the unregulated trade in conventional weapons. We therefore underline yet again that the ATT must be implemented in good faith by all States parties, including by the major manufacturers, exporters and importers of conventional weapons.

The issue of women and disarmament is of particular significance to Trinidad and Tobago. Promoting gender equality and the full empowerment of women is a priority for Trinidad and Tobago. I therefore wish to inform Member States that Trinidad and Tobago will again sponsor its biennial draft resolution entitled "Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control" (A/C.1/77/L.18) at this session of the First Committee. This year, the draft resolution has been strengthened to reflect recent developments in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and related issues. Once again, we welcome the valuable support of the Committee for this very important draft resolution.

Trinidad and Tobago wishes to reiterate its gratitude for the continued support offered by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mr. Larbaoui (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to warmly congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election to preside over the First Committee at this session. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and thank the Member States for having entrusted Algeria with the role of Rapporteur of the Committee. I wish you, Mr. Chair, and all the other members of the Bureau every success in fulfilling your responsibilities while pledging the support and cooperation of the Algerian delegation for the success of this session.

Nuclear disarmament is not a choice. It is an absolute necessity for the survival of humankind. It is a legal and moral obligation. In 1978, in the outcome document of the first special session on disarmament (resolution S-10/2), Member States agreed to include nuclear disarmament as an absolute priority in the agenda of international negotiations. The International Court of Justice thereafter concluded that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is against international law.

The Court clearly indicated that there is an obligation for nuclear disarmament. Non-nuclear States today remain concerned at the limited progress shown in the implementation of commitments for disarmament. Non-nuclear States are also deeply concerned at the ongoing updating and development of nuclear weapons.

Convinced that the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee of protection for the world from the dangers of those weapons, Algeria calls on nuclear-weapon States, which have the prime responsibility for nuclear disarmament, to honour their commitments under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to fully and effectively implement their legal commitments under article VI of the NPT. We also call on them to translate their commitments to nuclear disarmament into concrete reality and results that meet the aspirations of non-nuclear States. In that regard, my country, Algeria, deeply deplores the failure to adopt a final outcome document at the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. That failure sends a negative message to the international community amid a very delicate international situation.

Algeria welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which is a fundamental and positive contribution to achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament. My country also welcomes the holding in June of the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW and the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Action Plan. Those are ambitious steps towards implementing the Treaty. Algeria is fully confident that the Treaty is an important landmark achieved by the international community to delegitimize nuclear weapons and fully eliminate them.

Algeria remains convinced of the vital need for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as an important element of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We call on the eight remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay in order to activate its legal commitments.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is not simply a confidence-building measure; it is also a concrete step towards the full elimination of nuclear weapons. The establishment of such a zone in Africa has shown the firm commitment of the African continent to reaching that goal. It also reflects its collective will to be a model to be followed. Algeria was one of the first

African countries to ratify the Pelindaba Treaty and to support the implementation of the Treaty on a broad scale. I call on the remaining States to sign and ratify the Pelindaba Treaty and its three protocols.

Algeria also stresses once again the vital importance of creating a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. That remains a legitimate call and absolute priority for realizing lasting peace at the regional and international levels. We welcome the second Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction and its positive realistic outcome. We call on all parties invited to constructively participate in the third session of the Conference in November to negotiate a legally binding treaty pursuant to the 1995 resolution contained in document NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I).

The illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons continues to be a threat to peace, security and stability of many regions in the world, especially in Africa. In that context, Algeria welcomes the adoption of the outcome document of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We also welcome its creation of a fellowship programme to that end.

Based on the great importance that Algerian foreign policy attaches to the Mediterranean region, underpinned by the principles of cooperation, good-neighbourliness, mutual respect and common interest, my country will have the honour of introducing, as in previous years, the annual draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region" (A/C.1/77/L.24), both in the First Committee and in the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. The Algerian delegation calls on all Member States to support the draft resolution by co-sponsoring it.

Algeria welcomes the substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission held in April. We reiterate our full support for the Commission as a deliberative body that deals with various disarmament issues. We call for mobilizing the necessary political will in order to reach recommendations on those issues.

Strengthened political will is also required more than ever by the Conference on Disarmament, which has been unable to carry out its negotiating mandate entrusted to it for over two decades.

In conclusion, my country's delegation associates itself with the statements that were delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of African States and the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/77/PV.2).

Mr. Molnár (Hungary): Let me join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. Chair, upon your election and assure you of my delegation's full support.

Hungary associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/77/PV.2). Therefore, I will only make a few remarks from my national perspective.

The current security environment is extremely challenging and complex due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, which also increases the risk of nuclear escalation and miscalculation. Against that backdrop, the objective of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation is more important than ever. It is therefore a moral obligation to do our utmost to attain it.

Even under those difficult circumstances, it was our strong hope that the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) would be able to adopt a comprehensive final outcome document. Although we did have very complex and substantive discussions, we unfortunately were not able to reach consensus in the end. Nonetheless, we remain convinced that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, in accordance with its article VI, and an important element in the development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes, in accordance with its article IV. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to do our best to make the next NPT review cycle, which starts next year, a success and to preserve and strengthen the relevance and integrity of the NPT. To do so, we need to concentrate on issues that unite us and not on the divisive ones in all the three equally important and mutually reinforcing pillars of the Treaty.

As far as nuclear disarmament is concerned, Hungary shares the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. In the face of the increasing risk of the use of nuclear weapons, we must redouble our efforts to reinforce the norms against nuclear weapons and reject policies that threaten to use them. However, there is no fast track in nuclear disarmament. Only an incremental approach, consisting of gradual and concrete building

blocks, can produce tangible results. We need to focus on those stepping stones where common ground exists and where a consensus that includes nuclear-weapon States can be reached. Such indispensable steps are the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices and the development of effective verification mechanisms. Strategic nuclear risk reduction, transparency and confidence building are also potential areas where tangible progress can be made.

With regard to nuclear non-proliferation, Hungary is of the view that its credibility can be preserved only if emerging nuclear proliferation risks are addressed in a timely and effective fashion. In our view, multilateral export control regimes also play an essential role in that respect. Hungary is concerned about the uncertainty surrounding the fate of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, drawn up to ensure the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, and the lack of progress in the complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Fortunately, there are some positive developments as well. One of the important accomplishments achieved earlier this year was the successful conclusion of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We are pleased that, against all odds States, managed to agree on an outcome document by consensus. The role played by the two Vice-Chairs, Hungary and Guatemala, in establishing the final consensus in the absence of the Chair is fully in line with my country's advocacy of the view that the implementation of the Programme of Action is vital to stopping the illicit trade and diversion of these small arms and light weapons, which take more human lives than any other weapon.

We are also content that after three years of silence, the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) was able to resume its work this year under the able chairmanship of South Africa. For us, that is a significant and positive development because my country strongly believes that the UNDC can make a meaningful contribution to the disarmament and non-proliferation work of the United Nations. We are pleased that, this year, Hungary could effectively participate in that work by chairing the working group on outer space issues. We trust that next year, when

we will finish the work of this cycle, we can find the common ground necessary to adopt recommendations by consensus.

As Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe informal working group on cybersecurity since 2017, Hungary also attaches particular importance to cybersecurity. Therefore, we support the idea of establishing a programme of action to advance responsible State behaviour in cyberspace.

The coronavirus disease pandemic, which is still with us, should draw our attention to the danger of misusing biology for hostile purposes and to the importance of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), a fundamental pillar of the international community's efforts against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which was opened for signature 50 years ago. We call on States parties to contribute to the success of the ninth Review Conference of the Convention, to be held at the end of this anniversary year. For its part, Hungary will submit the annual General Assembly draft resolution on the BWC. We trust that, as it has been the case each year so far, the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus this year as well.

Mr. Utebaev (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. You will have the full support of my delegation during your chairmanship.

In recent years, members of the international community have made considerable progress in building the foundation for a safer world through a series of multilateral and bilateral arms control and disarmament accords. Among the most important were the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Each of those accords individually and collectively reinforced strategic stability by reducing arms race incentives and providing greater predictability in the strategic environment. It is more important than ever to recognize and strengthen those nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation approaches that continue to be effective, including nuclear-weapon-free zones and the NPT. In that regard, the First Committee faces a number of very important tasks, the solution of which will ensure peace and stability throughout the world.

Commitment to the policy of disarmament and prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is one of the fundamental principles of the

foreign policy of my country. As an active supporter of the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free world, Kyrgyzstan has become one of the initiators and a depositary of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. My country has been entrusted to serve as depositary of both the Treaty itself and its Protocol. As the depositary of the Protocol, Kyrgyzstan welcomes the signing of the Protocol on negative security assurances to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia by nuclear-weapon States in 2014.

This year, we will submit the traditional draft resolution entitled "Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia", which is presented regularly every two years with technical updates. Previously, the draft has been adopted by consensus. We call on Member States to support the draft resolution with its technical updates. Their valuable support will prove the importance of the sincere intentions and aspirations of the Central Asian States to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Kyrgyzstan, as a Chair and depositary of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, is committed to broadening and developing interzone cooperation. We are pleased to note the increasing pace of interaction between the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) and the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE), as well. I wish to emphasize that the Kyrgyz chairmanship will do its utmost to sign the memorandums of understanding with OPANAL and AFCONE.

We consider the strengthening of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and its foundation, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to be the most important goal. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is one of the most fundamental and effective international instruments in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We firmly support the importance and urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space and promoting its use for peaceful purposes only.

We reaffirm the central role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. We also recognize the important contributions that can be made by civil society, academia, members of parliament and the media. We also take positive note of the growing emphasis on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. My delegation attaches great importance to

the issue of mitigating the environmental consequences of uranium mining and associated nuclear fuel-cycle activities in the production of nuclear weapons. In that regard, Kyrgyzstan, on behalf of the Central Asia States, submitted the working paper on the environmental consequences of uranium mining as a document of the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. My country also joined the statement made by the delegation of Costa Rica on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons during the aforementioned NPT Review Conference.

The international community takes special notice of the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction and the need to raise awareness about them, especially among young people. Disarmament and non-proliferation education is an important tool for achieving that objective and can provide the knowledge and critical thinking skills essential to achieving concrete disarmament and non-proliferation measures.

Committed to peace, non-violence, nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and with a view to taking practical steps towards the implementation of the 34 recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/124), Kyrgyzstan proposes that 5 March be declared International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness by the First Committee at its seventy-seventh session. The formal draft resolution on declaring the International Day (A/C.1/77/L.14) has been submitted by Kyrgyzstan to the e-deleGATE portal. We invite the international community to support the initiative, which will contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security and will increase the prospect that future generations will live in a world without nuclear weapons. The proposed initiative will also have special symbolic significance as we celebrate this year the twenty-second anniversary of the adoption of resolution 55/33, the most comprehensive overview of the subject. We would also like to thank to the delegation of Mexico for its leadership and valuable work on the draft resolution entitled "United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education". It has the full support of my country.

In conclusion, we look forward to a productive discussion in the First Committee to enhance global security, promote further cooperation and sustain peace and prosperity throughout the world.

The Chair: I shall now call on those delegations that have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind delegations that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for a second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am compelled to take the floor to reject the allegations made by the representative of the Israeli apartheid regime against my country.

In fact, the dissemination of false and fabricated accusations against regional countries, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran, has long been a standard practice of Israel, with the exclusive purpose being to conceal that regime's core crimes under international law, namely, genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression. Nevertheless, it is quite evident that no amount of disinformation and manufactured crises can cover up the criminal nature or the expansionist and warmongering policies that this regime has pursued over the past 70 years.

Israel, in flagrant violation of international law and in total disregard for all relevant United Nations resolutions, continues its malicious acts through illegal and illegitimate actions in the occupied territories, as well as by assassinating scientists, by sabotage, and by cyber and kinetic attacks against other countries. It violates the fundamental rights and dignity of the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under its occupation. In fact, that regime has written and is writing a dark chapter in human history with, among others, its relentless attacks on the innocent people of Palestine and the repression of anybody who seeks freedom. Only last year, nearly 100 Palestinian youngsters were slaughtered and 200 children incarcerated by the regime. Shireen Abu Akleh and Nidal Aghbariya are merely the most recent journalists to be assassinated by the armed forces of the regime.

Worse still, under the current challenging circumstances and as the international community focuses on mitigating the severe effects and consequences of the coronavirus disease, the Israeli regime continues to exploit this period to accelerate its illegal settlement activities and annexation schemes in order to further entrench its military occupation. Those brutalities will continue until and unless the international community holds the apartheid regime accountable and prosecutes all the involved criminals. The regime's talk of human rights is morally bankrupt, and doing so just exposes its hypocritical nature.

On the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the undeniable fact is that the Israeli regime is the only culprit in the Middle East, and it continues to defy all international regimes governing weapons of mass destruction by refusing to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. Further, it continues to seriously hamper the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which was proposed by Iran in 1974. There can be no excuse for objecting to or taking any hostile positions on the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East. Indeed, nuclear weapons in the hands of that regime pose the most serious threat to the security of all States in the Middle East region and to the non-proliferation regime. Nevertheless, it attempts to portray Iran's exclusively peaceful nuclear programme, which is under the most robust verification of the International Atomic Energy Agency, as a challenge to regional stability. This is but a deceitful move to divert attention from the real danger posed to regional peace and security by the Israeli regime, particularly its nuclear weapon arsenals, as well as its clandestine and unsafeguarded nuclear installations and activities.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation rejects the insinuations that have been made by a number of delegations against our country as absolutely unfounded and unproven. I would like to declare that the accusations from Western countries against Russia concerning the threat of nuclear weapons are nothing but another element of the rabid anti-Russian campaign. Outside the world of twisted Western propaganda, things are very different. Russia's nuclear deterrence doctrine is exceptionally clear. It does not allow for an expansive interpretation and is purely defensive in focus. Russia's official rhetoric on this issue does not go beyond the bounds of that policy and is fully in line with our country's international obligations.

The international security situation has now deteriorated to a dangerous level. Through the fault of the West, a very serious crisis has emerged in the European arena with the involvement of nuclear Powers. Against that backdrop, Russian officials have been forced repeatedly to address the subject of growing nuclear risks. Those statements were obviously made with the United States of America and NATO in mind. Their hostile expansion, with the creation of an anti-Russian bridgehead in Ukraine, has jeopardized

Russia's fundamental security interests and forced us to respond decisively. The West, in turn, has attempted to balance on the brink of military confrontation, which would mean a direct armed conflict between nuclear Powers.

It seems that the United States and its allies are confident in their ability under any circumstances to control the escalation and to forcibly pressure Russia without any harm to themselves. That is dangerously misleading and could lead to an uncontrolled slide into the abyss, with catastrophic consequences. That is the essence of our signals and warnings to the West. This is not the language of threats, but rather the traditional logic of deterrence. However, our signals to the West are maliciously twisted for propaganda purposes. For the purpose of whipping up anti-Russia hysteria, it has distorted the decision of the President of Russia to temporarily move the deterrence forces into a special duty regime. However, in reality, this was exclusively about enlarging duty shifts in the command centres. That has allowed greater vigilance against the backdrop of confrontational statements and actions of the Western nuclear Powers. No measures to strengthen the group of forces or nuclear deterrence capabilities have been taken, as, by the way, also acknowledged by Western military personnel.

At the same time, we have noted signs of increased activity of Western countries' nuclear forces. On top of that, the West has distinguished itself by its irresponsible rhetoric. Literally one week ago, United States representatives in the media essentially threatened the possibility of dealing a decapitating strike against the capital of Russia. This was threatened not by politicians but by the military. If Washington believes that such rhetoric is responsible and acceptable, the vast majority of countries in this room would not agree.

To minimize nuclear risks, the permanent members of the Security Council must, through their actions, preserve their commitment to the postulate of the inadmissibility of a nuclear war, confirmed in the joint statement of 3 January. With the worsening of the Ukraine crisis, which took place due to the fault of the Kyiv regime and its Western patrons, the content of that statement has only gained an additional dimension. In accordance with the logic of the document, there is a need to prevent any military confrontation among nuclear Powers, since that could lead to a global disaster. That is what we are calling for.

However, we also hear calls that are diametrically opposed to this. In particular, the other day we heard entirely inappropriate and absolutely unacceptable statements from the Kyiv regime about the need for preventive nuclear strikes by NATO members against Russia. We will, as a matter of urgency, follow up on and take note of the response of Kyiv's Western patrons. It is important to understand whether Kyiv was acting with their knowledge and consent in this case.

Mr. Al Ashkar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have requested the floor to respond to the lies in the statement made by the representative of Israel about my country.

It is ironic that, on the one hand, the representative of Israel is talking about the concerns of his entity vis-à-vis peace and security in the Middle East and the non-proliferation regime even though everyone is well aware that his country is not party to any conventions on weapons of mass destruction. Everyone also knows that his country possesses hundreds of nuclear warheads with no international oversight. It also possesses a vast arsenal of chemical and biological weapons.

Israel, whose representative speaks about commitment to international law, disarmament and non-proliferation conventions, and who is giving us lessons about international cooperation and fulfilling international commitments, continues to this day to defy the will of the international community by flouting dozens of United Nations resolutions. Israel refuses to implement resolutions that for decades have called upon it to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories.

Israel is perpetrating organized State terrorism by launching aerial military acts of aggression against civilian facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic, including airports and seaports. Israel is killing innocent people and causing significant damage to the infrastructure without any respect for international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

We are in no way surprised to hear the representative of Israel talk about his country's commitment to international law even as it violates that law. We recall that Israel, through the Haganah, Stern and Irgun terrorist gangs, carried out a scorched-earth policy. It also forced the Palestinian people to leave their lands by committing massacres and atrocities there. Israel assassinated Count Bernadotte, the United Nations mediator for peace in Palestine.

We recall the adage that he who lies steals and he who steals lies. That is the case with Israel, which lies and fabricates stories in order to steal territories, fortunes and resources. The words we have heard from the representative of that horrific occupation are all fabrications and lies, the fundamental pillar of the occupation.

The representatives of the occupation believe that through falsification and lies they can mislead the world, but they cannot hide the ugly face of the worst occupation that humankind has ever witnessed. The representative of a State with such a record of atrocities and violations ought to be ashamed to talk about commitment to international law, human rights, disarmament and non-proliferation conventions.

In conclusion, I can assure the First Committee that Syria will not remain silent in the face of Israeli acts of aggression. We will hold Israel accountable for its illegitimate actions by all means possible within the framework of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): Ukraine would like to exercise the right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation. Unfortunately, the Russian delegation continues to spread lies in this room, so I would like to make very brief remarks.

First of all, there is only one country responsible for waging the war against Ukraine. The war was started by Russia alone, as I have already said numerous times, in violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, norms and principles of international law, and a number of important international agreements and treaties. However, I would like to focus on the elements that the Russian delegation raised about the strikes against itself.

The President of Ukraine gave an interview in which he spoke about the period before 24 February. That day marks the beginning of the war. Of course, at that time he believed it was important and necessary to impose preventive measures to prevent Russia from starting a war. Those measures were only preventive and consisted only in sanctions. He spoke about sanctions and nothing else. The Russian delegation continues to spread its lies, and the spokesperson to the President of Ukraine has already made a statement before mass media in which he provided clarification. The mass media misinterpreted the words of the President of Ukraine.

Mr. Vorontsov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have been forced to take the floor for a second time to exercise the right of reply in connection

with the propaganda clichés that the delegation of Ukraine is trying to trot out without responding to the substance of what we said.

Most important, Ukraine is unable to answer for the words spoken by its President yesterday. Instead, the Ukrainian representative is circulating the propaganda and insinuations that President Zelenskyy's press service tried to circulate yesterday. However, that has nothing to do with reality. It is another attempt to get out of the situation by whitewashing the direct quotes of President Zelenskyy's statements, who has repeatedly used the rhetoric of the development or use of nuclear weapons in his speeches and interviews. I invite all representatives to refer to the website where that interview is publicly available in Ukrainian and to listen to what President Zelenskyy said, directly from the source. We can clearly hear that he was not talking about preventive sanctions before 24 February; that is a myth invented by the press service of the President. He was talking specifically about the need for preventive nuclear strikes by NATO countries on Russia and not about anything else. I urge everyone to take a look at that interview in Ukrainian, and what I say will be clear to all.

In these circumstances, we will absolutely keep a close eye on and take into account the statements by President Zelenskyy when we take the necessary measures to ensure nuclear deterrence and the security of the Russian Federation, in accordance with the military doctrine and nuclear deterrence policy of the Russian Federation.

Ms. McKernan (United States of America): I regret to take the floor, but I must respond to the remarks made by the Russian representative.

Let us be clear here that President Putin and his nuclear threats against Europe, which have been articulated here in this room as well, are irresponsible and reckless. The consequences of nuclear use would be disastrous for Russia and the world, and Russia would be a pariah on the world stage. This is not new rhetoric from Russia or from Mr. Putin and his representatives here in the room. They have made those threats before over the course of the conflict, and accusing us or others of reckless nuclear rhetoric is simply outrageous. That is far from the truth and is another example of Russia's use of disinformation and lies in the context of its invasion of Ukraine. As President Biden has made clear, any use of nuclear weapons on any scale would be disastrous for the world and would entail severe consequences.

The Chair: We have heard from the last speaker.

Please permit me the indulgence of saying a few words. We have had serious discussions the whole week and I think we are entitled to a respite. Let us refresh our minds over the weekend.

I wish to leave members with the thought that we are all inhabitants of a minor planet hovering around one of the lesser stars. Did it ever occur to anyone here that that was the case? That is how small we are. We have to preserve this house, our home, the only planet we have. And it must be in peace. In that context, I found a very apt quote said by President Kennedy, which I thought I would leave members to mull over this weekend. He said:

“Let us examine our attitude toward peace itself. Too many of us think it is impossible. Too many think it unreal. But that is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads to the conclusion that war is inevitable — that mankind is doomed — that we are gripped by forces we cannot control.

“We need not accept that view. Our problems are man-made — therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable — and we believe they can do it again.

“I am not referring to the absolute, infinite concept of peace and good will of which some fantasies and fanatics dream. I do not deny the value of hopes and dreams but we merely invite discouragement and incredulity by making that our only and immediate goal.

“Let us focus instead on a more practical, more attainable peace — based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions, on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements which are in the interest of all concerned. [...] Peace need not be impracticable, and war need not be inevitable. By defining our goal more clearly, by making it seem more manageable and less remote, we can help all peoples to see it, to draw hope from it, and to move irresistibly toward it.”

My plea to members this weekend is to think about those dreams and thoughts. Let us come back re-energized in our own thoughts so that we can contribute in a large measure to a world of peace. I thank Committee members and wish all a great weekend.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.