



# General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

## First Committee

9<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 12 October 2022, 3 p.m.  
New York

Official Records

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

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

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

### Agenda items 90 to 108 (continued)

#### General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

**The Acting Chair:** As members are aware, the general debate should end this afternoon. There are 19 speakers remaining on the list of speakers. The Committee has also agreed that at least one and a half hours of the general debate will be devoted to statements by civil society. Based on that decision this morning, those statements will be heard tomorrow.

Joining us on the podium today is the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Conference, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya. I welcome her. We look forward to hearing from her later today.

**Ms. Haile** (Eritrea): Allow me to join the representatives who spoke before me in congratulating you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to steer the work of the First Committee.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/C.1/77/PV.2). My delegation wishes to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Seventy-seven years ago, the United Nations was created with the aim of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and ensuring justice and development for all. Yet we are meeting once again in the First Committee to address critical issues related to international security, disarmament, arms control and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Peace and development remain elusive for humankind. It is true that one should be realistic and one cannot expect an overnight change of the somewhat strained global atmosphere. My delegation wishes to underscore that there are certain actions that, if upheld, can build international confidence, which is critical for advancing the cause of international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The most important of those is the full observance of all principles and norms to preserve the sacrosanct principles of international treaties and agreements by recognizing collectively the need to pursue progress, on the fronts of both disarmament and non-proliferation. It is therefore imperative that multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations provide a solid basis for addressing disarmament, peace and security issues. Dialogue should be the central instrument for addressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Sanctions, threats or the use of force can hardly offer a sustainable solution to the proliferation concerns.

The relationship between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation on the one hand and the peaceful use of nuclear energy on the other should be appropriately addressed. My delegation strongly believes that it is the

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inalienable right of all States to develop all aspects of nuclear science and technology for peaceful use without any discrimination, consistent with the obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The free, unimpeded and non-discriminatory transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes must be fully respected. My delegation commends the International Atomic Energy Agency for its increased input and assistance to developing countries in the fields of nuclear power, nuclear safety and security, as well as nuclear technology application.

The lack of meaningful progress in the field of nuclear disarmament is indeed a concern. However, peace and security are not threatened by nuclear weapons alone. My delegation shares the concerns expressed by many representatives pertaining to conventional weapons, as well as the proliferation, transfer and circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons. More than any other type of weaponry, the latter have become the major instrument for destruction in developed and developing countries alike. In addition, other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological and toxin weapons, pose a threat to international security. The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegal and immoral. Legally binding negative assurances, the establishment of nuclear-free-zones and the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons are critical steps towards denuclearization.

Humankind faces a convergence of multiple challenges unseen for centuries, including the coronavirus disease pandemic, climate change, rising global inequality, transnational organized crime and terrorism. At a time when international cooperation and solidarity are most needed, geopolitical tensions between the major Powers have polarized and destabilized the world. The spectre of nuclear annihilation, which most of us thought had been relegated to theoretical discussions, is now real. As we all agree, the gravity of the interlocking problems with which our global village has to grapple is immense, warranting urgent and comprehensive remedial action. We live on borrowed time and we need to rise to the occasion. We must recognize that the resources and technological know-how at the disposal of humankind are urgently required if we set as our goal an inclusive and compassionate world order.

Let me conclude by calling on all parties concerned to demonstrate a determination to move the international security and disarmament agenda forward. We must ensure that this year's session of the First Committee will go beyond political bickering to find consensus on the way forward.

**Ms. Šćepanović** (Montenegro): At the outset, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their elections and assure them of the firm support of Montenegro.

Montenegro aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/C.1/77/PV.2). I would like to point out some issues in my national capacity.

The European and global security architecture has been critically undermined due to the unprovoked, unjustified and premeditated war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Montenegro once again strongly condemns Russia's aggression against Ukraine and all actions that lead to further escalation of the conflict, as well as nuclear sabre-rattling, which pose a great threat to humankind.

The manifest erosion of international trust and cooperation, along with the growing proliferation challenges, have put the disarmament architecture to a great test. The most recent example of the ever-growing geopolitical rupture was seen during the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We are truly disappointed as the Conference was again not able to reach an agreement on a final outcome document at a critical moment for nuclear security. Notwithstanding that outcome, the NPT remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and we need to further strengthen its pillars, as they remain more crucial for our collective security than ever before. Therefore, we call upon all States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty. We also call on those that are already parties to the Treaty to adhere to its provisions. We especially urge those States that have been out of conformity with the provisions of the Treaty to return to compliance with the NPT and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards agreement, bring into force the additional protocols and abide by their obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions. We also particularly stress the importance of providing continuous support

to the work of the IAEA, which is an outstanding actor in upholding the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime. In that vein, we particularly appreciate IAEA efforts to preserve European nuclear security through its current noteworthy activities in Ukraine.

We use this highly important forum to underline the importance of the prompt entry into force and universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which represents a valuable element of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. We call upon all States to join the CTBT and adhere to a moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosion. We also firmly believe that a positive outcome from the negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear-explosive devices remains imperative. Therefore, we urge all States to declare an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices.

Montenegro remains very firmly committed to the existing international instruments on curbing the use of chemical and biological weapons with a view to endeavouring to completely eradicate the use of such weapons of mass destruction. In that vein, important discussions will be held at the forthcoming ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention and the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We look forward with hope to the exchanges within those frameworks and are committed to proactive and constructive action in those processes.

Furthermore, in today's compromised international security environment, international instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects remain particularly valuable for addressing the joint challenges that pose a severe threat to security worldwide. For that reason, we call upon all States to join and unconditionally implement the provisions of the ATT and the Programme of Action, as they add important safety mechanisms to our joint endeavour to uphold collective security. Montenegro has established an effective and reliable export control system and a comprehensive normative framework with the aim of mitigating all risks deriving from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related materials. We are very firmly determined to further advance our

national practices, and in that regard we look forward to working with other countries in jointly protecting and improving the international security architecture.

In conclusion, allow us to reiterate Montenegro's rock-solid commitment to support the implementation of the elements related to the promotion of peace and the prevention of conflicts outlined in the Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982). We also commend the efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda, which further strengthens the gender equality perspective. In addition, we are convinced that a special emphasis must be put on the potential of use of nuclear energy, as an essential component of the low-carbon transition, in our endeavours to systematically address the climate crisis. To that end, we need to forge lasting partnerships with different stakeholders — civil society, academia, the private sector and others — if we are to uphold our joint obligation, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to preserve international peace and security. To that end, Montenegro will remain a forward-looking actor that is unequivocally committed to strengthening the international order, with international law, human rights and fundamental freedoms at its core.

**Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chair on his election to manage the work of this important Committee. My delegation assures him of our cooperation in achieving a successful session. We are fully confident that his diplomatic experience will contribute to the success of the First Committee.

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

Disarmament and arms control constitute a basic pillar of the system for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Charter of the United Nations affirms the importance of cooperation to achieve that objective. The Syrian Arab Republic believes that multilateral conventions consistent with the Charter represent the only sustainable way to deal with international security and disarmament issues.

The importance of such conventions is increasing in our world, which faces many challenges, above all the development and modernization of nuclear arsenals and the spread of terrorism and its adoption as a political

weapon by some States. Facing those challenges calls for a renewed respect for the rule of international law, the United Nations Charter and the implementation of bilateral and multilateral commitments in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, while avoiding double standards and politicization.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the international system for nuclear disarmament and the primary foundation of international peace and security. As a member of that key treaty on weapons of mass destruction, Syria continues to be fully convinced that the elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee for the non-use of such weapons. In that context, the Syrian Arab Republic regrets the failure by the tenth Review Conference of the State Parties to the NPT to arrive at consensus on a relevant final document due to the political selfishness of Western countries, which put their geopolitical interests ahead of the interests of the States parties to the Treaty. As a result, another opportunity was missed to achieve an effective consensus on the implementation of the obligations and commitments under the Treaty contained in the final documents of the previous Review Conferences and their resolutions.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses the need to implement the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference as a part of the package that led to the indefinite extension of the Treaty. Syria emphasizes that the main obstacle to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is Israel and its continued refusal to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear State, despite all the calls for it to do so made by the majority of the States Members of the United Nations. That Israeli intransigence is based on the encouragement of the United States and its allies and their protection of Israel's nuclear programme and its other chemical and biological military programmes. They have even contributed to the development and strengthening of those programmes.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that Israel is the only country that possesses weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. It continues to refuse to accede to all the relevant major conventions and treaties on the prohibition and prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, making it the main threat to peace and security in the region.

The Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes that it condemns and rejects without reservation the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and at any time. Syria voluntarily acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention and honoured in record time all its obligations under that Convention. It has cooperated fully with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to close that dossier in the shortest time possible. Unfortunately, some countries have scandalously politicized that dossier by continuing to make baseless allegations against Syria, the sources of which are terrorist groups and their supporters; casting doubt on Syria's cooperation with the OPCW, based on reports that lack credibility and professionalism, while manipulating the provisions of the Convention to establish illegal mechanisms; or adopting Western-imposed resolutions against Syria at the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties, which is a dangerous precedent in the work of the organization.

The Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly addressed numerous letters to the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, the Director-General of the OPCW and the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), transmitting important information about the possession by terrorist groups of toxic chemical materials and their use against civilians and the military. The fact is that the Governments of well-known countries and their intelligence agencies have provided terrorist organizations, such as Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front and its White Helmets, with toxic chemical materials to actually put to use or to use as the basis for fabricating allegations and accusations against the Syrian Government. Those actions were then used to justify the aggression of those Governments against Syria. In that context, my delegation stresses that the issue of accountability, to which a limited number of speakers alluded, does not cover the mandate of that Committee. Raising that issue here is an attempt to divert our debate from its intended focus and is a waste of the Committee's time. It also politicizes the Committee's work.

My country reiterates its support for the approach of Russia and China in preserving international law and ensuring security and stability in the world. We condemn the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. My country commends the constructive and responsible



approach of Iran in dealing with that matter. We emphasize our full solidarity with Iran. My country also condemns the actions of the United States aimed at militarizing the situation on the Korean peninsula. We call for ceasing the military manoeuvres it conducts on the Korean peninsula, which only lead to increased tension in the region.

In conclusion, my country calls on the international community to intensify international efforts in order to achieve security, stability, peace and prosperity in the Middle East region, based on compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which provide for non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States, good-neighbourliness and mutual respect, as well as the promotion of international cooperation.

**Mr. Conte** (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): First of all, my delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Pakistan (see A/C.1/77/PV.3), Nigeria and Indonesia (see A/C.1/77/PV.2) on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Group of African States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively.

I would also like to congratulate the Chair on his election. He and the Bureau can count on the support of my delegation.

Today more than ever, it is obvious that there is no justification for the arms race or the use of arms in the world. It is therefore high time that we continue efforts to curb the dizzying pace of the arms race. Our planet needs stability, peace and tranquillity. The existing stocks of weapons of mass destruction must be exhaustively inventoried with a view to their systematic elimination. Those weapons constitute an ongoing threat to international peace and security, which is why we must do everything possible to ensure that they are no longer used in theatres of conflict such as civil wars.

On 26 September, on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, Secretary-General António Guterres rightly urged all States “to use every avenue of dialogue, diplomacy and negotiation to ease tensions, reduce risk and eliminate the nuclear threat”. That call comes at the right time. It should be heard and should deter all those who still encourage the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world. In recent years, we have often witnessed a marked increase in the enormous investments in nuclear weapons. That worries more than one observer on the international stage.

In contrast, some populations barely earn enough to eat each day. Children’s education is a pressing issue and seems like a beautiful ideal, perhaps even a perpetually unfulfilled dream. Others face the adverse effects of climate change. In short, many people are exposed to poverty in all its forms and dimensions. With each passing day, the horizon darkens, darkness replaces the joy of living and the future becomes increasingly uncertain.

In that context, the international community should change track and consider a new approach to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation with a view to guaranteeing international peace and security. In our view, no nation in the world can wage nuclear war alone and emerge victorious. That is why we need the combined efforts of all countries, big and small, rich or poor, to wage a merciless fight against weapons of mass destruction. The survival of our planet greatly depends on it.

The Treaty of Pelindaba, also known as the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, has been in force on the African continent since 15 July 2009. Paragraph 5 of its preamble states that:

“the African nuclear-weapon-free zone will constitute an important step towards strengthening the non-proliferation regime, promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, promoting general and complete disarmament and enhancing regional and international peace and security”.

For Africa, in addition to nuclear, bacteriological, chemical and other cybercrime threats, the circulation of small arms and light weapons continues to be a serious concern for the maintenance of peace and security. In order to regulate their circulation, my delegation proposes intensified efforts to raise awareness among local elected officials along borders; strengthening the fight against corruption linked to the traffic and illicit possession of arms; and the identification of manufacturers and buyers through tracing and marking. In a context marked by the intensification of terrorism and armed conflicts, the uncontrolled circulation of weapons poses a dangerous threat to the security of the continent. Tragically, civilian populations are the most exposed to the harm caused by those criminals. This is the forum in which to call on the international community to vigorously combat that phenomenon, which endangers the security of Africa and the world. To date, to reverse this trend, information-sharing and

the cooperation of all countries concerned have been necessary and indispensable in the fight against the proliferation and illicit trafficking in arms.

The Republic of Guinea is not immune to the phenomenon of the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. We have set up a national commission to deal with that, which has drawn up a very ambitious national action plan for the period 2018–2022. To sustain and strengthen those achievements, Guinean authorities have ensured the close involvement of all bilateral and multilateral partners. Some measurable and satisfactory results have been achieved on the ground. However, the fight is far from being won because the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons is a long-term battle that requires sufficient resources and increased vigilance on a daily basis and at all levels.

**Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to congratulate the Chair on his election, and I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. My delegation assures them of its full support to ensure the success of the work of the First Committee under these exceptional circumstances.

Sudan associates itself with the statements made 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).

My country's delegation would like to express its deep concern at the current geopolitical tensions in the world, particularly among nuclear-weapon States, the repercussions of those tensions and the dangers facing humankind that have destabilized international security and stability. Therefore, increased efforts are needed for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. If that objective is not achieved, there will be no international peace and security.

The current crises reveal the need to strengthen multilateral frameworks, which represent the only sustainable mechanism capable of finding solutions to international crises. Despite the failure to make any progress on nuclear disarmament during the ninth and tenth Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the NPT remains a crucial and necessary pillar for all future negotiations on disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Sudan therefore supports the universalization of that Treaty. It is our wish that the eleventh Review Conference

will allow for progress to be made to strengthen the credibility of the Treaty by agreeing on transparent measures that would allow us to achieve its objectives.

Conventions on zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, remain one of the most important means of achieving international peace and security. We welcome the holding of the first and second sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. The Sudan calls on all the States of the region to enter into constructive discussions so as to ensure the success of the third session of the Conference, which will be presided over by the sisterly Lebanese Republic. We also support the draft resolution introduced by the Group of Arab States on that issue (A/C.1/77/L.1).

The Sudan reiterates its full commitment to supporting international efforts to achieve universal peace, disarmament and non-proliferation. To that end, we ratified a number of relevant international conventions and instruments, such as the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). My country also supported the efforts that led to the conclusion of the Pelindaba Treaty. The Sudan calls on all States to demonstrate goodwill and accede to all those treaties.

The Sudan welcomes the efforts of the United Nations to prevent the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and calls for the implementation of the Programme of Action in that regard. Like other countries around the world, the Sudan has suffered from that phenomenon. There is therefore a need to strengthen international efforts to prevent such weapons from falling into the hands of terrorist groups and illegal armed groups.

In conclusion, with respect to the efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space, the Sudan welcomes resolution 72/250 and supports the substantive discussions on adopting an internationally binding document that will prevent an arms race in outer space and limit the use of outer space to serving humankind for peaceful purposes.

**Mr. Gimolieca** (Angola): Allow me to congratulate the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their elections and on the work they have done so far to allow us to pursue the First Committee's vital work to advance international peace and security.

At a time when the world is grappling with numerous challenges to peace and security, multilateralism is crucial for addressing disarmament, non-proliferation and international security, in accordance with the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Nuclear weapons pose a growing catastrophic danger to humankind and, if States continue to increase and improve their nuclear arsenals, our collective security will be in danger. The achievement of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons depends on the commitment of nuclear-weapon States to dismantle their nuclear weapons. Resolution 70/34 underscores the importance of multilateral disarmament efforts in the pursuit of a safer world for all and the achievement of peace and security throughout a nuclear-weapon-free world. We strongly believe that nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons remain the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

We underscore the importance of continuing to respect the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In that regard, we stress that the International Atomic Energy Agency must continue to play an essential role in promoting dialogue and consultation among States on nuclear safety, the provision and promotion of technical support and cooperation and maximizing the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development.

We reaffirm the central role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the consolidation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as well as their contributions to addressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation across all regions of the world. Angola has already signed the Treaty of Pelindaba, which reaffirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We believe that strengthening an existing zone and creating a new one is a crucial step towards achieving a world free from nuclear weapons. Through its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 2015, Angola sent an unequivocal reminder of its commitment to create a nuclear-free Africa as an essential component of a nuclear-free world.

The use of small arms and light weapons is a sovereign right of States in order to ensure their self-defence and national security needs. However, the illicit trade in conventional arms and ammunition, their diversion to non-State actors, their excessive accumulation and their uncontrolled dissemination in

many regions of the world, especially in Africa, have had profoundly destabilizing effects, fuelling conflicts, violent crimes and terrorism. We remain committed to 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 welcome the successful outcome of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, which was held from 27 June to 1 July in New York.

In conclusion, the challenges we face today in disarmament and non-proliferation are global and critical and require that Member States have political will and transparency in dealing with international disarmament and security issues. To that end, Angola stands ready to work with the First Committee and all stakeholders to achieve the global disarmament agenda.

**Mr. Kelapile** (Botswana): I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating the Chair on his assumption of the chairmanship. He and the other members of the Bureau can be assured of my delegation's support towards the successful consideration of all agenda items of the First Committee.

Botswana aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and of Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/77/PV.2). We wish to deliver a few remarks in our national capacity.

The current international security environment is a cause for deep concern. In a way, it reflects a weak commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and to disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control and other international regimes that aim to make the world a more peaceful and safer place. In that regard, there is a need for a renewed commitment to those instruments. For its part, Botswana continues to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to promoting international peace and security through adherence to both traditional and new obligations. Regarding disarmament and non-proliferation, we wish to join those who have noted their disappointment at the failure of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to adopt an outcome document.

However, we would like to state that, despite the disappointing end to the Conference, we were encouraged by the emphasis placed on the promotion

of peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the importance attached to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Technical Cooperation Programme. The Agency has facilitated Botswana's access to nuclear technology in order to prevent and control livestock diseases and promote crop production. We therefore consider the IAEA a key player in fostering international peace and security and a partner in attaining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Be that as it may, we wish to underscore the importance of implementing and strengthening the NPT pillar commitments in a balanced and mutually reinforcing manner. I would also like to note that any disappointment with regard to the NPT Review Conference should not overshadow the progress made in relation to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), in particular its entry into force, the successful holding of the first meeting of the States parties to the Treaty and the adoption of the Vienna Action Plan. As the fortieth country to ratify the TPNW, Botswana has been impressed with its progress and implores other States to sign, ratify and accede to it, thereby leading to its universalization and the eventual realization of the disarmament goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

In addition to the NPT and the TPNW, Botswana is committed to its obligations in the context of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which is a cornerstone of the weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation architecture. To that end, we are working with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and partners such as the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, in collaboration with the United States of America and the European Union, on strengthening national implementation capacity.

Prior to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease pandemic, there was already an increasing use of information and communication technologies. The advent of the pandemic accelerated that growth, as well as the threats associated therewith. The work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021—2025 is therefore critical, and we will remain actively engaged in this intergovernmental process. At the national level, we have formulated a cybersecurity strategy that, among other objectives, aims to promote collaboration and cooperation on cybersecurity issues at the national, regional and international levels.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Botswana's commitment to the international security and disarmament agenda and the multilateral framework within which that noble goal is pursued.

**Mrs. Assoweh** (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): First of all, my delegation would like to congratulate the Chair on his election to chair the First Committee during this difficult time. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We encourage the Chair in the achievement of objectives during his mandate. My delegation stands ready to work with him.

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

The world we live in is threatened by multifaceted and multidimensional crises that have caused great loss to humankind. That is why the search for concrete and lasting solutions to remove the various obstacles to disarmament is urgently necessary today. The challenges facing the United Nations Disarmament Commission are numerous and include the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the risks of errors linked to the testing of nuclear weapons, the insalubrious use of information and communication technology and the ever-growing distrust among States. Our country deplores the failure of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was held in New York from 1 to 10 August. We are also concerned about the obstacles to the implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which dates back 26 years. My delegation joins the calls made by other delegations and invites the eight annex 2 States that have not yet signed or ratified the CTBT to do so without delay in order to build confidence and facilitate dialogue and the implementation of other legally binding disarmament frameworks.

The First Committee has committed to tackle those issues by promoting actions towards peace, security and development, as underlined in the Secretary-General's report *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. We have committed to action to save humankind and our planet. That commitment requires us to come together to find solutions to the problems of disarmament, rather than to be driven apart.



My delegation takes this opportunity to welcome the choice of “scientific solutions” as highlighted by the President of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly in his opening statement (see A/77/PV.1). Such a science-based choice should objectively make it possible to find common ground among nations to move towards a world based on peace and security. Unfortunately, it is no secret that we are moving away from that scientific logic every day.

The constant proliferation of nuclear weapons, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the appearance of new types of weapons, including cybernetic weapons, biological weapons and autonomous weapons, are some examples. Our hope rests on the efforts of the United Nations and its bodies, in particular the Office for Disarmament Affairs. Accordingly, the work of all the open-ended groups of experts created under the auspices of the Disarmament Commission can advance discussions on the implementation of concrete disarmament solutions.

We welcome the adoption of the annual progress report of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021—2025 at its third substantive working meeting, held in July 2022, as well as the adoption of the final document by consensus at the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, held in New York from 27 June to 1 July.

Our country is committed to the fundamental values of the Charter of the United Nations, the main objective of which is to maintain international peace and security. In that context, we support the settlement of conflicts through multilateral dialogue rather than through an arms race. We reiterate our commitment to the Pelindaba Treaty for an Africa free of nuclear weapons. In the same context, we support the creation of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East. That commitment would contribute to the NPT.

We also support the involvement of women in the disarmament process at the national, regional and international levels.

The prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space is of paramount importance. We encourage the development and implementation of legally binding documents, in compliance with the United Nations Charter, to save our common good from danger.

To support our commitment to peace and disarmament, this year Djibouti will sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which has been open for signature since 20 September 2017. We encourage other States that have yet to do so to join the signatory States.

We encourage all the efforts made by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, regional and subregional offices, as well as all the experts of the First Committee, and we wish members every success in the work of the Committee at this session.

**Mr. Musayev** (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chair and the other members of the Bureau on their elections.

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

Azerbaijan is strongly committed to its obligations in the areas of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament and will continue supporting international efforts aimed at eliminating the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction, achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world, ending illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, addressing the challenges arising from new technologies and in cyberspace, ensuring respect for international humanitarian law and promoting confidence and cooperation.

The aggression committed against my country by neighbouring Armenia in the early 1990s has seriously destabilized the security situation in the region. A significant part of the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan was seized and has remained under occupation for nearly 30 years, in clear violation of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Among the other military and humanitarian ramifications of the war, Armenia used the occupied territories to conceal its military activities from the relevant international and regional arms control and verification mechanisms, including the deployment of forces and the stockpiling of undeclared and uncontrolled military equipment, armaments and ammunitions in those territories. Over the years, Armenia has provided inaccurate and incomplete information about its armed forces in the annual exchange of military information under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Vienna Document and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Another act of aggression by Armenia in the fourth quarter of 2020 became a logical consequence of its decades-long impunity. Direct and indiscriminate missile attacks that struck Azerbaijani cities and districts, including with the use of internationally banned cluster bombs, killed and wounded hundreds of civilians and destroyed numerous civilian objects. Azerbaijan resolutely responded to protect its people and restore its territorial integrity, acting exclusively on its sovereign soil, in full conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. During the hostilities, which lasted 44 days, the armed forces of Azerbaijan liberated more than 300 cities, towns and villages from occupation and a trilateral statement was signed on 10 November 2020, ending the 30-year aggression and conflict.

Armaments worth billions of dollars belonging to Armenia that were destroyed or seized in the territory of Azerbaijan, along with the losses of the personnel of its armed forces, exposed Armenia's long-standing denial of its responsibility for aggression, occupation and non-compliance with the arms control regime. The post-conflict realities offer an opportunity and real prospects for building peace, consolidating stability and investing in economic development and cooperation.

Therefore, immediately after the end of the conflict, Azerbaijan initiated the process of normalizing inter-State relations with Armenia, while underscoring the pressing need for concrete results on three specific tracks to form a basis for the agenda of bilateral discussions — the delimitation and demarcation of the State border, the earliest possible conclusion of a peace treaty and the opening of transport communications in the region, as provided in the trilateral statements of 2020 and 2021.

However, during this period, despite the strong support from the international community for this initiative and diplomatic efforts made to move the normalization agenda forward, Armenia has done everything possible, in words and in deeds, to obstruct the process and backtrack from the implementation of the agreements that have been reached. The revanchist objectives behind Armenia's destructive position are evident. The dangers associated with this position manifested in a serious escalation provoked by Armenia last month, prompting Azerbaijan to take adequate and proportionate countermeasures to neutralize the threat against its sovereignty and territorial integrity and ensure the safety of its military personnel and civilians.

This escalation was not an isolated episode, but another link in the chain of destabilizing actions by Armenia over the past months.

Armenia refuses to completely withdraw the remnants of its armed forces and illegal armed bands from the territory of my country and to return to Azerbaijan eight enclave border villages. Armenia regularly violates the ceasefire, fails to prevent racist hate groups — formed for the specific purpose of inciting and committing violence against Azerbaijanis — from operating openly and notoriously on its territory.

In addition, a complex mine threat impedes ongoing rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts and the safe return of internally displaced persons. Throughout the conflict, Armenia has indiscriminately planted hundreds of thousands of mines and other explosive devices in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan. As a result, more than 3,300 citizens of my country became victims of mines during the last 30 years, including 357 children and 38 women. In the post-conflict period — over the past two years — approximately 260 Azerbaijani civilians and military personnel have been killed or injured by mine explosions. Moreover, despite the agreement on the cessation of all military activities, Armenia has continued to plant mines inside Azerbaijan. Thus, more than 3,000 mines detected in the border districts of Azerbaijan were laid after the signing of the trilateral statement in November 2020.

Armenia must share accurate and comprehensive information about all minefields and cease and desist from mine terrorism against Azerbaijan. In addition, more international support to further develop and strengthen national mine action efforts in Azerbaijan are critically important to save lives and ensure the safe return of internally displaced persons to their homes. Strengthening security and building trust among Member States is possible only through ensuring strict compliance with the fundamental norms and principles of international law, in particular those relating to respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. They are universally binding and remain as important as ever for the maintenance of international and regional peace and security and the promotion of sustained economic growth, sustainable development, human rights and justice.

**Mr. Edu Mbasogo** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to congratulate Vice-Chair Juan Marcelo Zambrana Torrelío and all

the other members of the Bureau for their election to the leadership of the First Committee. They can count on the support and cooperation of the delegation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

We endorse the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/C.1/77/PV.2).

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea has always expressed in the First Committee its support for general disarmament. We support the issue of nuclear disarmament as a priority and make significant efforts in this area, as demonstrated through our clear and sustained commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Within the framework of the strictest respect for the treaties and agreements enshrined in international law, during the high-level segment of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, on 21 September, our country ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Then, on 22 September, we signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). By joining the CTBT and committing to the TPNW, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea confirms our Government's foreign policy of contributing to international peace and security, helping to strengthen international norms against nuclear weapons and promoting efforts towards their complete elimination, as part of the duty that the Charter of the United Nations imposes on every Member State. Equatorial Guinea is proud to be part of these international instruments for world peace.

We reiterate the call to those States that have not yet done so to ratify or sign the TPNW and the CTBT. We specifically call on the States listed in annex 2 to the CTBT to speed up the signing or accession process. The success of the TPNW and CTBT will depend, to a large extent, on full compliance with their provisions and on addressing, urgently and without discrimination, the fulfilment of all commitments under the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), namely disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It remains essential for countries to comply with their obligations under the NPT and the relevant safeguards agreements without reservations and in good faith.

We regret the failure of the tenth NPT Review Conference, which was held in August 2022. The Conference concluded without achieving the consensus necessary to adopt a final document that would allow

for progress to be made in the implementation of the Treaty. That was due to the division among the nuclear superpowers and the failure to reach a viable solution and to respect the valuable participation of and expectations the majority of the other States parties for the Conference.

We reiterate that the only effective way to avoid the horrific impact of nuclear weapons is their complete, verifiable, transparent and irreversible elimination. At the same time, nuclear-weapon States must offer universal, legally binding, unconditional and non-discriminatory guarantees that they will not, under any circumstances, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. They must also, without further excuses, provide a deadline for their general, complete and internationally verifiable disarmament with regard to their respective nuclear weapons systems.

We also support General Assembly decision 73/546 and the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. Our country also supports the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Similarly, we condemn the militarization of cyberspace and outer space. Both spaces require the adoption of a binding legal instrument that addresses existing legal gaps.

Equatorial Guinea remains concerned about the illicit trafficking, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of small arms and light weapons, their excessive accumulation and their uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, in particular on the African continent. Violence is closely related to the presence of the illicit markets arising from various forms of transnational organized crime, namely illicit trafficking in arms, ammunition and components. It is also related to the lack of controls on the arms trade in various regions of the world, specifically in those countries that manufacture weapons and who seem not to understand how, despite their sophisticated controls and progressive legislation, their weapons and their components end up in our underdeveloped societies, which do not own arms factories. We ask for transparency and good faith from the developed countries who own factories that produce small arms and light weapons and their components.

We call for the resources used in the arms race to be allocated instead to supporting our work to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development and to achieve a more just, peaceful and stable global society. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea will continue to demand in this forum, as in all others, respect for international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and adherence to multilateralism in disarmament negotiations.

**Mr. Zuhuree** (Maldives): Let me begin by congratulating the Chair on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, and the other members of the Bureau on their elections. I assure the Chair of the full support and cooperation of the Maldives delegation as he steers the Committee's work.

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

One of the primary principles of the United Nations, as enshrined in the very first Article of the Charter, is to maintain international peace and security and to ensure that conflicts are resolved, not through violence, but through dialogue and mediation. Therefore, global disarmament and non-proliferation must remain at the forefront of the work of the United Nations.

In 1945, we bore witness to the destruction and tragedy unleashed by nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since then, their destructive potential has increased many times over. A nuclear war fought today would end human civilization. As long as nuclear weapons exist, so does the possibility of their use — either by design or by miscalculation. The world will never know peace until and unless all nuclear weapons are abolished.

The Maldives has always advocated for disarmament and non-proliferation. We do not manufacture weapons, nor do we aspire to do so in the future. We are among the original signatories of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Maldives has also acceded to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Arms Trade Treaty, to voice our favour for the removal and withdrawal of military forces and weapons.

The Maldives welcomes the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, held in June, at which the Vienna Declaration and Action Plan were successfully adopted. Furthermore, we were encouraged to see the leaders-level meeting of the Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty held on the margins of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, at which major Powers

reiterated the pressing need to pursue the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We are also hopeful that these actions will set the course for a world free of nuclear weapons. The Maldives welcomes the convening of the Disarmament Commission in April. The Commission has the sole power within the United Nations multilateral disarmament system to consider various problems in this field and to submit concrete recommendations to the General Assembly. We look forward to the 2023 session of the Disarmament Commission and hope more substantive proposals are put forward.

The Maldives firmly believes that true security and strength can only be achieved through investments in the well-being of our people and our environment. Yet, every day, we see numerous countries pour billions into military expenditure and the acquisition of weapons, diverting resources away from crucial issues such as poverty, education and climate action. Maintaining international peace, upholding the principles of humanity and realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can only be achieved through disarmament.

*The Chair took the chair.*

In times of heightened international tensions and conflict, there is a false belief that security can only be achieved by taking up arms. Not only is this perspective dangerous, it is primitive. As outlined in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, armed conflicts have become longer, more frequent and more devastating. The existence of nuclear weapons compounds the danger inherent in these conflicts to the extreme. Since 2019, the Maldives has ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Arms Trade Treaty. The Maldives welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in January 2021. We also welcome the first meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which took place in June.

The Maldives urges all countries to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Disarmament is not a naïve or a utopian vision. With the requisite commitment and political will, it is a goal that can be realized. If we succeed, we will have made the world a safer and more peaceful place. Therefore, let us work together, with firmer resolve, to turn our aspirations for a nuclear-free world into a reality.



**The Chair:** I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): I am delighted to see you, Mr. Chair, presiding over the First Committee. I have had the privilege to sit beside you when the meeting seating configuration allows. I am also privileged to be seated between the representatives of the Holy See and the European Union. But, above all, I am delighted to see you chairing our Committee. Allow me to read my prepared statement in Arabic.

*(spoke in Arabic)*

On my behalf and on behalf of the delegation of the State of Palestine, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair and the rest of the members of the Bureau, for assuming the work of the Chair of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I assure you that we are fully prepared to provide you with all the support needed for the success of the work of the Committee during this session. I also align the State of Palestine with the statements of the Permanent Representative of the sisterly 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) on issues related to disarmament and international security.

The State of Palestine underscores the importance of full commitment to the rules of international law, including international humanitarian law. We reaffirm that the existence, use and threat of use of weapons of mass destruction under any circumstances constitute a flagrant violation of the primary principles of international law and the purposes of the United Nations Charter. The State of Palestine believes that the only way to remove the risk and threat resulting from weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, is their complete elimination. We therefore call on all countries of the world to work nationally, bilaterally and through multilateral frameworks to dispose of those weapons under the umbrella of the United Nations and all international conventions and norms, as those weapons constitute the biggest threat to international peace and security.

In that context, the State of Palestine is highly concerned about the failure of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to adopt an outcome document for the second time in a row. We

stress that the deliberations on nuclear disarmament have not risen to the required level and reflect the absence of serious progress towards achieving nuclear disarmament.

The State of Palestine is committed to working at the regional and international levels to enhance endeavours aimed at disarmament in terms of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, we reiterate the importance of the strategies aimed at creating zones free of weapons of mass destruction, especially the efforts undertaken to establish a Middle East free of those weapons. Therefore, we must assert the importance of the outcomes of the first and second Conferences on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which were chaired by the brotherly countries of Jordan and Kuwait, respectively. We also wish the sisterly Lebanese Republic every success in chairing the third session of the Conference next month. In that context, we reaffirm that the Conference is a platform that allows for the participation of all parties. It also takes decisions by consensus. The Conference does not exclude any party at all. If one party decides not to participate, namely Israel, it is because that party wants to continue to possess nuclear weapons in an unlawful manner and considers itself above the law, enjoying all the exceptions to the rules while others must respect the rules. That constitutes a threat to the peace and security of our region and weakens the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We call upon all countries to support the Conference, especially nuclear States, at the forefront of which are those who presented the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Despite the existential threat caused by weapons of mass destruction to all humankind, we must not forget the threat still posed by conventional weapons, especially when used by States and parties that do not respect international law or treaties. The State of Palestine calls for concerted efforts to establish control and follow-up mechanisms for the use of conventional weapons, wherever they exist. We also must find effective deterrence mechanisms that prevent the export of such weapons to States that use them to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity, as is being done by the occupying Power and settlement terrorist groups in my country.

In conclusion, the best and most important investment is the investment in humankind and future generations. Is it not better to provide financing for tools

that ensure the advancement of humankind, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals? That is better than developing tools that might annihilate humankind. It is wrong to bet on arms as the only means to achieve security. We must work on enhancing our international system, international law, justice, development and international cooperation. Those are the best and most important tools for establishing international peace and security.

**The Chair:** I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

**Archbishop Caccia (Holy See):** My delegation congratulates you, Mr. Chair, on your election and would like to assure you of its full support during this session.

Sixty years ago, humankind stood on the precipice of nuclear annihilation as the United States and the Soviet Union came perilously close to war in the Caribbean Sea. It was only through their leaders' commitment to dialogue and recognition of the devastating impact of nuclear war that the world averted destruction. Writing shortly after the crisis, Pope John XXIII observed that true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust. On the basis of such trust, he called for the banning of nuclear weapons and for disarmament under an effective system of mutual control. Over the ensuing decades, States began to construct the disarmament architecture as we know it. However, the goal of general and complete disarmament remains out of reach owing to, in the words of Pope Francis, a lack of vision for the future and shared consciousness of our common destiny.

The disarmament architecture now hangs by a thread. Leaders must recommit to dialogue and adopt an approach of integral disarmament, which calls on every person to disarm his or her own heart and to be a peacemaker everywhere. As Pope Francis has said, international peace and stability cannot be based on a false sense of security, on the threat of mutual destruction or total annihilation, or on simply maintaining a balance of power. In the light of this, the Holy See reiterates that any threat to use nuclear weapons merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.

Even in our troubled times, there are signs of hope for disarmament. This year, another six States ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), moving it towards universalization. The Holy See

calls upon all States, especially the remaining annex 2 States, to promptly sign and ratify the Treaty. The more than 2,000 nuclear tests that have occurred since the dawn of the nuclear age have brought untold suffering to thousands of people and have rendered some natural environments unliveable. Given this appalling record, it is beyond time to verifiably ban nuclear testing for all States.

In another positive development, nine States ratified and five States signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) this year, signalling their recognition that nuclear deterrence is not only illegal but also immoral. States Parties have adopted an integral approach towards redressing nuclear harm, transforming a culture of injustice and violence to a culture of fraternal love that assists victims and remediates contaminated environments in a restorative manner. In doing so, the Treaty complements both the CTBT and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The success of the First Meeting of States Parties of the TPNW contrasts with the regrettable failure of the tenth NPT Review Conference to achieve consensus. That failure demonstrated that many States still subscribe to what Pope Francis describes as a perverse dichotomy that tries to defend and ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust. Until we transition from such a mindset towards one of integral disarmament, the threat of the use of nuclear weapons will remain. Their total elimination is the only guarantee that they will not be used again.

As Pope Paul VI observed during his address before the General Assembly in 1965, a person cannot love with offensive weapons in his hands. This year, world military expenditure passed \$2 trillion for the first time. This harmful spending squanders resources that could promote integral human development and save countless lives. Without addressing this rampant proliferation, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will remain elusive. Most worrisome is the growing use of indiscriminate weaponry, such as antipersonnel mines and cluster munitions. The Holy See condemns this use and calls on all States to swiftly ratify or accede to the conventions prohibiting such weapons.

The threats posed by the proliferation of weapons extend beyond terrestrial areas. The Holy See notes with concern the development of orbital weapon systems and anti-satellite missiles. As outer space forms part of our

common home, it is our responsibility to ensure that all, including future generations, can benefit from its vast potential. The testing of anti-satellite missiles at any altitude is incompatible with this responsibility. The Holy See welcomes moratoriums on such tests as a first step toward banning them outright. Such a ban could complement laudable legal efforts to prohibit the weaponization of outer space.

Pope Francis has observed that the Internet offers immense possibilities for encounter and solidarity. These possibilities, however, are threatened by the malicious use of information and communications technologies. To defend against this threat, it is essential that all States foster a spirit of fraternity in implementing the 11 United Nations norms of responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, as outlined in the 2021 report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security (see A/76/135). In particular, the protection of critical infrastructure and the reporting of vulnerabilities are crucial for limiting the real-world consequences of cyberattacks, which have the potential to cause real harm to persons.

Other new technologies also put humankind at risk. In his address to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session (see A/75/PV.10), Pope Francis warned that lethal autonomous weapons systems irreversibly alter the nature of warfare, detaching it further from human agency. By separating the unique human capacity for moral judgment from actions that could result in bodily harm or even death, lethal autonomous weapons systems cannot maintain compliance with international humanitarian law. In the light of this, the Holy See calls for the consideration of a moratorium on the development and use of lethal autonomous weapons systems pending the negotiation of a legal instrument that prohibits such systems.

**The Chair:** I now give the floor to the observer of the League of Arab States.

**Mr. Abdelaziz** (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee for this session. The league of Arab States (LAS) reiterates its confidence that your diplomatic expertise would lead to the success of the work of the Committee. We would also like to affirm the support of the LAS and its member States to you and to the members of the Bureau. My delegation

aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Iraq on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/C.1/77/PV.2).

Our Committee is meeting against the backdrop of a grave security situation in the world, one that threatens the fate of humankind as a whole. Military operations and counteroperations continue, accompanied with a sharp increase in international tensions among the major nuclear Powers on strategic, tactical and operational issues. They are all aimed at the restoration of the balance lost among them, which is a result of the major differences in their military doctrines. That has negatively and significantly affected the ability of the multilateral international system to discharge its main tasks, primarily the maintenance of international peace and security through the collective security regime. That regime is based on the Security Council, which has been completely paralysed as a result of those tensions.

Our leaders recognized the gravity of the situation in the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, which stressed the need for all parties to honour their contracting commitments as a basis for strengthening the multilateral international system, which we all consider as fundamental for maintaining international peace and security. In his report entitled *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), the Secretary-General presented many proposals that aim to restore the balance lost. We hope that those proposals will provide a solid basis for a new era of consensus, cooperation and solidarity towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Agenda 2063 of the African Union and other international and regional agendas that aim to achieve our legitimate development objectives, far from the spectre of nuclear confrontation or nuclear arms race that threaten to annihilate all humankind.

The LAS and its members are fully committed to the maintenance of international and regional peace and security. They have worked for complete disarmament, including nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Our Member States have consistently supported the international regime on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. They all, without exception, acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) before the 1995 Extension and Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. They have also worked hard to fully implement its three pillars accurately within the Arab territories. They consolidate their commitment

through their serious pursuit of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. They have always participated effectively in all international and regional forums to support the implementation of the Treaty, including the negotiations on new international treaties and conventions that strengthen deep-rooted international positions aimed at the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, a lack of commitment persists among the nuclear Powers with respect to the implementation of what they agreed to or what was adopted by consensus in the Treaty and the outcome documents of the Review Conferences, including those of 2000 and 2010, in particular concerning nuclear disarmament and the universalization of the Treaty. The nuclear-weapon States must immediately eliminate all their nuclear weapons and accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear States. They must also place all their nuclear facilities under the Comprehensive Safeguards System of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Concurrently, the nuclear Powers must intensify their efforts to implement their nuclear disarmament commitments in order to reduce the international risks of the deliberate or accidental use or threat of use of those weapons. Efforts should also be made for reducing their use as a means of deterrence towards nuclear and non-nuclear countries alike.

At a time of eroding Treaty-related negative security assurances, the concerns are growing among the non-nuclear States, particularly Arab States, about a nuclear confrontation among nuclear Powers due to recent grave political and military developments, with respect to which we are deeply concerned. Those developments include the expansion of military alliances and the placement of nuclear weapons on the territory of members of those alliances, in clear contravention of their commitments under the NPT. They also include the occupation of parts of the territories of others by force or the threat of use of nuclear weapons as nuclear deterrence. In connection with those developments, the joint statement of the nuclear Powers of 3 January unfortunately claimed that nuclear deterrence is the way to prevent a new nuclear war.

The failure of the 2015 and 2022 Review Conferences must be a warning sign for all of us. The failure of this year's Review Conference happened in conjunction with a sharp confrontation among nuclear Powers and alliances, particularly concerning the military operations raging in Ukraine and their repercussions on its unity and territorial integrity.

The LAS has formed a special contact group to negotiate with relevant parties in order to arrive at a peaceful settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. We always stand ready to make every effort to defuse tensions and arrive at a peaceful settlement of that grave crisis at the earliest possible opportunity. We look forward to the cooperation of all parties concerned to ensure that the situation does not deteriorate further.

Undoubtedly, the First Committee bears a major responsibility for arriving at a new international balance and consensus on how to promote security at the international and regional levels. It is called on now more than ever to redouble its efforts, in view of its responsibility and credibility, especially considering the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, by creating the conditions conducive to implementing international commitments. The members of the League of Arab States believe that the three depositary States of the NPT have a special responsibility. They were co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, adopted as a part of the package on the indefinite extension of the Treaty. They all committed to working on the implementation of that resolution through an international and multilateral framework within and outside the Treaty.

The League's member States introduce a draft resolution every year on the threat of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, in addition to a draft resolution on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. Both draft resolutions target the universalization of the Treaty in our region and Israel's accession to the NPT as a non-nuclear State along with its agreement to subject of all its nuclear facilities to the IAEA's comprehensive safeguards system. The League looks forward to seeing continued international support for the two draft resolutions from all Member States in the First Committee and the General Assembly.

We also look forward to international support for the success of the work of the United Nations Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held every November, albeit without the participation of Israel and some of the nuclear Powers that adopted the 1995 resolution. Those countries have failed to participate despite joining the consensus during the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on convening a conference for establishing such a zone. The League would like to see a clear change in their



position that would advance the negotiations on the establishment of the zone based on understandings among the countries of the region, including Israel, and with the presence and support of all nuclear-weapon States and other international Powers.

I will deposit the remainder of my statement, on conventional weapons and outer space, with the Committee.

**Mr. Costa Filho** (Brazil): As Coordinator, and given that it was impossible for the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) to be here this afternoon, I shall read his statement.

*(spoke in Spanish)*

“I warmly congratulate you on your election to chair the First Committee. You can count on OPANAL’s full support, and we also congratulate the members of the Bureau and the secretariat. After two years of virtual participation due to the pandemic, it is a joy to return to the General Assembly and take part in the work of the First Committee in an in-person format.

“I will begin by presenting a gloomy panorama that has become rather commonplace for the Committee. The statements by the delegations that have spoken before me are proof of that. What is not commonplace is the situation in which we currently find ourselves — at risk of nuclear war, something we have not seen since the dark month of October 1962, exactly 60 years ago, when my region, Latin America and the Caribbean, was on the verge of becoming a theatre for a nuclear confrontation. It was in the wake of that serious situation that the States in my region decided to promote the establishment of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated zone, through the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which has been used as an example for other international instruments, among them the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Treaty of Tlatelolco also became one of the essential components of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. The special situation of the States whose territories are completely free of nuclear weapons impresses on them the importance of maintaining that situation, both for their own benefit and for the good for humankind. Accordingly, the Member States of OPANAL are of the view that any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is a violation of international

law, including of the Charter of the United Nations. We unequivocally condemn each and every nuclear threat, whether explicit or implicit, and regardless of the circumstances.

“On 26 September, the international community commemorated the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The 33 Member States of OPANAL, as they have done since the General Assembly established this commemoration in 2013, issued a joint position for the occasion in which we expressed our priorities and concerns with respect to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Among them is the demand that nuclear weapons never be used again in any circumstances or by any actor, something that can be ensured only through the prohibition and subsequent transparent, verifiable and irreversible elimination of all nuclear weapons. It also included a new appeal to the United States, France, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation to withdraw or modify their interpretive declarations of the Treaty of Tlatelolco’s additional protocols I and II, which go against the spirit of the Treaty. We appeal to those countries to review the proposals made by OPANAL with a view to resolving the issue.

“The member States of OPANAL took part in two other very important forums for the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, namely the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the tenth NPT Review Conference. Despite the efforts that were made, only in the first case did we manage to achieve results. The Review Conference failed to come up with an outcome document, a fact also mentioned in the joint position of the member States of OPANAL. While we regret the lack of agreement and the lack of real progress towards a nuclear-weapon-free world, we reiterate our commitment to the NPT and the results of the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences.

“In conclusion, I would like to inform the Committee that the OPANAL member States are working on an initiative that will be open to all States Members of the United Nations and will be shared in a timely fashion in order to promote the full implementation of the principles and goals of the existing treaties that establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as to support the establishment of other zones in regions where they do not yet exist.”

**The Chair:** I now give the floor to the observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

**Mr. Gisela** (International Committee of the Red Cross): The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is grateful for the opportunity to address the First Committee.

Every year we have stood before the Committee to highlight the humanitarian consequences of weapons. Mitigating and preventing such consequences for civilians and combatants should be at the centre of disarmament efforts. As the First Committee commences its work against a backdrop of heightened international tension and multiple crises, its role is more essential than ever. If there is one area where the need to strengthen the existing disarmament framework is most urgent, it is that of nuclear weapons. The risk that such weapons may be used is growing, despite the overwhelming evidence of the horrific effects of nuclear weapons on health, the environment, climate and food security, despite the absence of adequate capacity for humanitarian response and despite the risk of escalation that any use would involve.

Nuclear weapons are one of the biggest threats to humankind. This year, the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons adopted an ambitious declaration and action plan. We welcome that development and call on States parties to abide by those commitments. Also this year, the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) again failed to adopt an outcome document by consensus. We are deeply concerned about this issue and urge States parties to fully implement the NPT. We also call on all States that have not yet done so to promptly join those treaties.

While the threat of the use of nuclear weapons grows, conventional weapons continue to cause devastating harm to civilians. Hostilities often take place in densely populated cities on the doorsteps of people's homes, but they continue to be fought with weapons that are ill adapted for use in urban environments, such as heavy explosives. Every day, all over the world, the ICRC bears witness to the acute suffering caused by the misuse of arms and ammunition facilitated by poor controls for their possession, transfer and use. Ultimately, civilians remain the main victims of conventional weapons. This year saw the finalization of a political declaration on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, which

the ICRC welcomed and firmly supports. We encourage all States to endorse it and to avoid the use of heavy explosive weapons in populated areas. There must also be redoubled efforts to promote universal adherence to all instruments prohibiting or restricting the use or transfer of conventional weapons.

The use of new technologies of warfare gives rise to serious legal and ethical dilemmas, and risks causing profound human suffering. Only last year the ICRC underscored to the Committee (see A/C.1/76/PV.7) how urgent it is for States to adopt new, legally binding rules on autonomous weapons to ensure that sufficient human control and judgment are retained in the use of force. That will require prohibiting certain types of autonomous weapons and strictly regulating all others. We are encouraged that a growing number of States view the setting of internationally agreed limits on autonomous weapons as necessary and feasible, and we call on them to take immediate concrete steps to pave the way towards treaty negotiations.

Society's reliance on digital technologies adds a new layer of risk for civilian populations, especially where the functioning of critical civilian infrastructure is enabled by space systems and information and communications technologies. We urge States to consider the risk of humanitarian consequences when taking any decision with regard to military space or cyber operations. We call on States to interpret and apply existing rules of international humanitarian law in good faith to ensure sufficient protection for civilians and civilian infrastructure and data during armed conflicts. If new, legally binding instruments or other norms are to be developed, they must be consistent with the existing legal framework and should strengthen it.

**The Chair:** We have heard the last speaker on the list for the general debate.

The Committee will now hear an address by the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative to the Conference on Disarmament of the Secretary-General, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya.

**Ms. Valovaya** (Conference on Disarmament): I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to address the First Committee in my capacity as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament (CD).

This year, the Conference started its work shortly after the joint statement made on 3 January by the five permanent members of the Security Council, in which

they affirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought. That constructive joint message gave rise to hope that meaningful and sustainable progress in disarmament and non-proliferation could follow. Indeed, against that positive backdrop, the session began with the Conference successfully reversing the trend of the past few years of rejecting requests for observer participation. By accepting all States wishing to have a seat at the table and participate in the work of the Conference as observers, the Conference demonstrated its commitment to ensuring effective multilateralism through inclusivity. The Conference also saw the establishment of five subsidiary bodies, which enabled a structured substantive discussion throughout the year.

The diplomatic efforts demonstrated at the beginning of the year were instrumental in achieving those successful results. The CD member States demonstrated their flexibility and cooperative spirit when agreeing to resume structured substantive discussions through the established subsidiary bodies. I would also like to acknowledge the collaborative spirit of the P6+2 this year, continuing the good practice of previous years in ensuring continuity not only among Presidents but between the annual sessions of the Conference. Unfortunately, this year's session, despite a promising beginning, was disrupted by an outbreak of geopolitical tensions that unravelled the carefully crafted setup for substantive discussions. Even in that context, however, the Conference succeeded in adopting the reports of the two subsidiary bodies that pertain to, first, preventing an arms race in outer space, and secondly, new weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, radiological weapons, a comprehensive programme of disarmament and transparency in armaments.

In addition to the non-adoption of other subsidiary-body reports, I also regret that the Conference could not agree on its usual report to the General Assembly. Even if in past years the annual reports to the General Assembly had only a few paragraphs that reflected the substantive work, they still served to give an indication of the proceedings in the Conference for that year. A one-page report this year making no reference to the substantive discussions is a regrettable development.

As I noted in my statement to the Conference in January, we continue to witness rising global tensions, growing distrust and polarization, arms competition, the politicization of disarmament forums and an overall erosion of our disarmament structures. The ongoing tensions are exacerbating and accelerating those negative trends, making it difficult to achieve progress in a

multilateral setting or the Conference on Disarmament. I remain firmly convinced that the Conference is a crucial element of the global disarmament architecture, and it has a role to play in reversing negative trends. The historical significance of the Conference, however, does not safeguard it from the crucial necessity of adapting to the reality of our times. We must work collectively to ensure that the Conference is fit for purpose to produce effective solutions to today's challenges in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. As Secretary-General of the Conference, I will continue urging all CD members to engage in dialogue and cooperation. Political will and flexibility will be key to the Conference's ability to uphold its mandate. I remain ready to continue supporting the Conference to that end.

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

**Ms. Maayan (Israel):** I am compelled to take the floor regarding references to my country made by the delegations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Palestinian Authority.

Iran is to blame for the majority of mistrust in the Middle East arms-control architecture and has violated its commitments under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Furthermore, I would like to remind all delegations that Iran is the world's primary State sponsor of terror and the world's biggest proliferator of small arms and light weapons, heavy weapons, rockets, missiles and other related technologies such as unmanned aerial vehicles. All of that is done in the name of promoting its radical agenda and destabilizing the entire Middle East and beyond.

Syria, for its part, has yet to answer open questions from the IAEA regarding its clandestine nuclear programme and is also violating its commitments under the NPT and the safeguards agreements. The existence of undeclared nuclear activities in Syria remains relevant and worrisome, as do the open questions related to the nature and operational status of specific sites and materials within Syria. Syria also permits Iran to establish bases within its borders and allows a radical terror organization to act freely in the country, undisturbed. Both actors seek to destabilize the region and threaten its inhabitants.

Syria has used chemical weapons against its own population, killing hundreds of women and children. It is vital for the international community to remain vigilant in dealing with the challenges of Syria's non-compliance in order to prevent 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 activities with regard to its chemical-weapons programme. My Iranian and Syrian colleagues will likely follow my remarks with some wild and preposterous accusations about Israel. I can assure the Committee that they represent nothing but reflexive finger-pointing at us in order to distract from the heinous crimes of their Governments.

Finally, it is regrettable that the representative of the Palestinian Authority chose to make a statement containing false accusations. Israel categorically rejects them.

**Mr. Grigoryan (Armenia):** Our delegation has asked to exercise its right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of Azerbaijan earlier today. It does not come as a surprise that the delegation of Azerbaijan has once again attempted to misuse this international forum for the mere purpose of disseminating narratives that are well known to be fabricated and false. I would like to mention a few points in that regard. In a maxim that President John Adams of the United States made famous,

“Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence”.

The wish and inclination are very clear as far as the delegation of Azerbaijan is concerned. They seek to distort reality and mislead the international community with standard tactics such as victim-blaming. On the opposite side are the facts. In September, Azerbaijan attempted a new, large-scale military aggression against the sovereign territory of Armenia with the purpose of spreading terror and creating new faits accomplis.

The details of that aggression were presented in our national statement during the general debate (see A/77/PV.9). As was the case in 2020, when Azerbaijan attacked Nagorno-Karabakh, the military aggression was preceded by a massive military build-up and provocative rhetoric. As was the case in 2020, this time the deliberate targeting of the civilian population and

the criminal conduct of Azerbaijani armed forces again took place. The brutal killing of Armenian prisoners of war by Azerbaijan's forces shocked the world and has been widely condemned. As was the case in 2020, before the hostilities began there were numerous calls to establish international monitoring mechanisms that could prevent any escalation. Unsurprisingly, Azerbaijan was the side that rejected the establishment of such mechanisms.

Grave violations of the conventional arms-control regime and confidence- and security-building measures by Azerbaijan have posed a serious security threat to the region. It exceeded its ceilings in four of five categories of major conventional arms established by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. The Azerbaijani armed forces located along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border have for decades been completely excluded from inspection and verification, undermining the credibility of data provided by Azerbaijan under the annual military information exchange and enabling Azerbaijan to concentrate large amounts of unverifiable forces and military equipment along the borders of Armenia and in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone. Armenia has called constantly for greater attention from the international community to those violations. Over the decades, Azerbaijan has never shifted from its policy of using force and the threat of force to project its expansionist policy in the region. It has regarded any calls from the international community for refraining from the use of force, establishing confidence-building measures or adhering to existing conventional arms-control provisions as unnecessary hindrances to its expansionist policy and has ignored or continually violated them.

Lastly, Armenia has provided many warnings about how Azerbaijan's policy of aggression threatens the peace and security in our region. Specifically, we warned about its continuing violations of arms-control regimes and its massive military build-up, which according to relevant international sources have made our small region one of the most militarized areas in the world. The international community's inability to properly address this has allowed Azerbaijan to utilize every moment and opportunity to launch new aggressions. We therefore believe that for the sake of regional peace and security, the relevant international bodies should speak about the blatant violations of Azerbaijan, all acts of atrocities should be fully investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice.



**Mr. Kim In Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation feels compelled to exercise its right of reply in response to provocative statements made by the representatives of Australia and other European countries. We categorically reject the outrageous allegations of the European countries that are aimed at demonizing my country in this forum. We once again call on European countries to refrain from pursuing a Cold War mentality and double standards. Moreover, Australia has no right or qualification to dispute our self-defensive capability. Australia, which is pursuing the AUKUS partnership and is a perpetrator of international proliferation, is on the receiving end of an outpouring of denunciations and rejection in the region. It is preposterous that Australia, oblivious to its own miserable situation, finds fault with our legitimate exercise of our right to self-defence. Its reckless behaviour is an outrageous infringement on our sovereignty and a grave, politically motivated provocation. If Australia pokes its nose into the issues on the Korean peninsula it will only invite undesired consequences.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our position on the situation on the Korean peninsula. The United States continues to rattle sabres menacingly by holding frequent massive joint military drills and introducing nuclear-strike weapons into and around the Korean peninsula. On top of that, South Korea is running wild, stepping up dangerous military moves and modernizing armaments while trumpeting the alleged strengthening of its combined defensive posture and enhanced deterrence and countering capability, thereby aggravating the military tensions in the region. These serious circumstances show that the protracted military situation around us is going from bad to worse and that we should therefore be thoroughly prepared.

The ultimate goal of the United States is to someday overthrow my Government by pressing us to disarm and renounce our right to self-defence. For all intents and purposes, our self-defence capability is aimed at containing any possible outbreak of war by making any hostile forces abandon their attempts at aggression and military attacks. Our national capability for self-defence is the legitimate right of a sovereign State in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The President of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea said in his policy speech to the Supreme People's Assembly,

“If our nuclear policy is to be changed now, the world has to be changed, and so too does the political and military environment on the Korean

peninsula. Neither abandonment of nuclear power nor denuclearization will be forced on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and nor will there be any negotiations to that end or use of bargaining chips in the process.”

As a responsible nuclear-weapon State, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will fulfil its non-proliferation commitments in good faith. The United States' complete, verifiable and irreversible removal of its hostile policies and nuclear blackmail is integral to ensuring lasting peace and security on the Korean peninsula. The international community should take an analytical look at the nature of the situation on the peninsula and reject bloc bullying and double standards, which will lead only to confrontation and conflict.

**Mr. Vorontsov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are once again compelled to take the floor to exercise our right of reply in connection with the unfounded accusations by Western delegations regarding Russia's special military operation in Ukraine. The main issue is that we have a different view of the roots of the Ukrainian crisis and the transformation that has taken place in that country since the Western-backed anti-constitutional coup d'état of February 2014. The Western States' motives are clear. They are trying at all costs to evade their responsibility for turning an independent Ukraine into a nationalist, radical anti-Russia, and for the eight years of constant shelling of the Donbas by the Kyiv regime. Russia, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, began its special operation to protect the residents of the Donbas after the Kyiv regime, with the approval of its Western sponsors, publicly put a stake through the heart of the Minsk process. It was a difficult but necessary decision that we took after it became clear that Ukraine's military action against the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics was inevitable. Documents of the Ukrainian general staff discovered during the special operation confirm that.

As we all know, a mere month after the start of the operation the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine had almost agreed on the outlines of a future agreement. Peace seemed so close that Russia, in a gesture of goodwill, withdrew its troops from the regions it had occupied in the Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy oblasts. The ball was in Kyiv's court, and they were ready to come to an agreement, but at that point the West — in particular London and Washington, which did not approve of this scenario and were in control of NATO — intervened.

The fact is that from the moment the illegal Maidan coup began, Ukraine was of interest to them only as a pawn in the geopolitical fight to weaken Russia. The peace scenario therefore did not suit either the United Kingdom or the United States. Representatives of Western countries went to Kyiv and insisted to President Zelenskyy and his team that the West was ready to do everything short of direct military involvement to ensure Ukraine's victory. The slogan was that a battle of good versus evil was being waged in Ukraine that would also determine the fate of world democracy. As a result, and as we know, President Zelenskyy disavowed all agreements and the chance for peace was lost, while the Ukrainian President had made a fatal mistake for his country.

From that moment, the West has waged a large-scale proxy war on Russia that is being fought by Ukrainians until the last Ukrainian dies. NATO is effectively pulling the strings and directing Kyiv's every move in the theatre of conflict. Representatives of Ukrainian military intelligence have publicly admitted that Washington is directly involved in agreeing on every target of America's HIMARS multiple rocket launch systems. Ukraine is flooded with Western military instructors, special services and mercenaries. For Ukraine, the consequences of these actions are terrible, and we are now still far from the end of this self-destructive process. Having created a State on our borders that is led by radical nationalists and Russophobes, and having also supported the Kyiv regime's war on the people of the Donbas since 2014, the West left us no choice. Unfortunately we have no belief in the good sense of Western countries. They have repeatedly shown that for the benefit of the so-called golden billion, and in order to preserve their own world domination and continue their neo-colonialist policies, they are ready to commit any crimes or misadventures. We did not start this war. We are ending it.

**Mr. Al Ashkar** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I asked for the floor because I would like to respond to the statement by the representative of Israel. The true danger to the non-proliferation regime, and the real threat to regional and international peace and security, have resulted from Israel's aggressive behaviour in the Middle East, its continued refusal to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the nuclear capabilities it possesses outside the framework of the NPT and its refusal to abide by the comprehensive safeguards agreements.

Israel's refusal to join the NPT or any other international conventions related to the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, and its possession of large-scale nuclear capacity, should render it ineligible to speak about unwillingness to abide by the NPT.

Israel continues to defy the will of the international community and insists on remaining outside the non-proliferation regime, relying on its full support from its allies. That will require intensive action at the international level to institute practical measures of deterrence that can make Israel accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear State and enable the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, taking into consideration the commitment of every other State in the region to achieving that goal.

We condemn Israel's aggression in 2007 against the sovereignty of Syria's territory and urge that it be condemned and denounced as a flagrant violation of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations. We also condemn it as a starting point for attacking Syria, the victim of aggression, with the aim of tarnishing its image and exerting political pressure on our country. Israel's recognition of its responsibility for that aggression against Syria after a decade of denial and lies makes it imperative to ensure that Israel cooperates with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and provides convincing answers about the type of missiles it used in that aggression. Israel claims that it upholds security and peace and implements its international commitments on disarmament and non-proliferation. That cannot conceal the continuing reality that Israel is not a party to any of the conventions related to disarmament and non-proliferation.

It seems that the representative of Israel is not aware of the bloody history of the entity that she represents. Israel was the first to use chemical and biological weapons in the Middle East. The Israeli representative's statement is full of lies and hypocrisy. Moreover, her accusations are a desperate attempt to divert attention from the danger of Israel's nuclear weapons and cover up the fact that Israel does not uphold the United Nations resolutions that call on it to join the NPT, in particular Security Council resolution 487 (1981), on joining the IAEA's comprehensive safeguards agreement.

Israel's aggressive and criminal record has exhausted our Organization since its creation. Every room at the United Nations in New York and Geneva

has borne witness to a thousand resolutions that have been adopted in response to Israel's aggression, its occupation of Arab territories and the slaughter it has committed against Arabs in Israeli prisons.

**Mr. Gurbanov** (Azerbaijan): My delegation takes the floor in exercise of the right of reply to address the misleading and provocative statements by the representative of Armenia.

While Azerbaijan has been resolutely trying to create an atmosphere conducive to the normalization of relations, and despite the strong support from the international community for that initiative, there has been little reciprocity from the Armenian side. The danger associated with that position was manifested in a serious border escalation recklessly provoked by Armenia earlier this month. The countermeasures taken by Azerbaijan against that military provocation were limited and targeted only legitimate military objects that posed a threat to Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

Nevertheless, the Armenian tradition of spreading disinformation about Azerbaijan has continued its efforts to confuse the international community and Armenian society as well. We should emphasize that Armenia has neither the legal, political or moral grounds for making any statements concerning the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan or matters falling within my country's exclusive sovereign rights, competence and responsibilities. Any attempt by the representative of Armenia to support his country's territorial claims and fabricate historical narratives by referring to fake names in his statement is invalid. The territory to which Armenia refers is an integral part of Azerbaijan, which has been consistently reaffirmed in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly. Notably, by a decree of 7 July 2021, the President of Azerbaijan established the Karabakh economic region, which is an integral part of Azerbaijan. Furthermore, the presence of the remnants of Armenia's armed forces, including illegal Armenian armed formations in the Karabakh economic region of Azerbaijan, remains another source of danger. It will be essential to see the complete withdrawal of those forces and their equipment from this region, as stipulated in article 4 of the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020, and the disarmament of any illegal armed formations.

Over the years, it has been Armenia that has provided inaccurate and incomplete information about its armed forces stationed in the formerly

occupied territories of Azerbaijan in the Annual Exchange of Military Information under the 2011 Vienna Document of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. That fact is also reflected in reports of the Secretary-General on conventional arms control and confidence-building measures. Unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan takes its international obligation to investigate the alleged cases seriously. However, the Armenian Government has not yet taken any effective measures to prevent war crimes or to bring the relevant people to justice for the crimes committed. Not a single person has been brought to justice in Armenia for the numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity that have been committed since the beginning of the 1990s and that are still ongoing.

Since the first Karabakh war, the Armenian armed forces have carried out unprecedented massacres not only against Azerbaijani servicemen but against civilians. The best-known example is the genocide in Khojaly, when on 26 February 1992, 613 civilians were brutally killed in the town of Khojaly in a single night. So far, no information has been given out on the fate of the missing 4,000 Azerbaijanis. In October 2020, Armenia committed crimes against humanity when it launched missile attacks on the civilian population of the Azerbaijani cities of Ganja, Barda and Mingachevir. Most notably, a mass grave containing the remains of 12 people, tied with wire and rope and bearing signs of torture, was recently found in the formerly occupied village of Edilli in the Khojavand district of Azerbaijan. The incoherent statements from Armenia have contributed nothing to the hoped-for outcome of the current plan to normalize inter-State relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

**Mr. Balouji** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am compelled to take the floor to reject the blatant lies and baseless allegations made by the representative of the apartheid regime of Israel against my country.

In yet another desperate endeavour, the representative of the Israeli regime has attempted to conceal its destabilizing, malicious and terrorist activities in the region. They include covert operations, subversive and disruptive measures aimed at Iran's peaceful nuclear programme, and the cowardly and abhorrent assassination of innocent Iranian citizens and scientists in order to further its sinister objectives in the region. It is ironic that this terrorist regime, which has a deplorable track record of developing,

producing and stockpiling various types of weapons of mass destruction, has maliciously accused Iran of violating Security Council resolutions, and this despite the fact that it has repeatedly committed flagrant and systematic violations of those resolutions for a number of years. The Israeli regime has used every opportunity to threaten and dismantle the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action as well as to undermine the implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) by the States Members of the United Nations. Israel's allegations regarding Iran are therefore completely absurd, irrelevant and baseless.

We believe that the international community must compel the Israeli regime to cease all of its destabilizing and adventurist activities in the region. The Israeli regime has threatened the regional countries with nuclear annihilation and still continues to threaten to use force against Iran. The most recent example of that is a statement by Israel's National Security Adviser, Head of the National Security Council and Minister of Defence in which they confirmed the responsibility for Israel's subversive operations and terrorist acts within Iranian territory. Such statements constitute not only a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations but also a blatant admission of responsibility for Israel's destructive terrorist operations against Iran. It also proves that the Israeli regime is responsible for criminal as well as terrorist acts and must be held accountable in order to suffer the consequences.

**Mr. Grigoryan** (Armenia): I apologize for taking the floor for a second time, but I must respond to the comments by the representative of Azerbaijan. Unfortunately we continue to witness attempts to misrepresent reality. The recent aggression by Azerbaijan was discussed in the Security Council in September (see S/PV.9132) at Armenia's initiative, and many spoke about the attack on Armenia's territory. Unfortunately, we are still hearing one country trying to say that it was Armenia that started this aggression. We have witnessed that behaviour in the past and have warned about it in many international forums, including the United Nations.

Given Azerbaijan's fabrications regarding the events of last month, we can imagine how far this delegation can go in order to reimagine the reality of 30 years ago. The war in the 1990s started with Azerbaijan's aggression against the people of

Nagorno-Karabakh, involving the massive use of notorious foreign terrorist organizations and of heavy weaponry against the civilian population in Stepanakert and other cities of Nagorno-Karabakh. It was an attempt to force the population of Nagorno-Karabakh to leave their historical homeland. We witnessed pogroms and genocidal intent in Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad and in Nagorno-Karabakh itself.

Lastly, it is ironic that Azerbaijan is trying to prove its own allegations by using the parts of a report of the Secretary-General that reflect only Azerbaijan's own national statement. That is nothing more than another attempt by that country to try to justify the unjustifiable and present a distorted reality.

**Mr. Gurbanov** (Azerbaijan): The representative of Armenia chose once again to rely on a standard set of fabrications. As a result, we have heard irrelevant assertions that confirm that the notion of peace is alien to Armenia. It is known that the conflict began in the late 1980s with Armenia's unlawful and grand territorial claims and assaults on Azerbaijanis posted in Armenia and in areas of Azerbaijan populated by ethnic minorities. Serious violations of international humanitarian law amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as acts of genocide, were committed by Armenian forces in the course of the aggression, resulting in the killing of thousands of civilians and the ethnic cleansing of more than 700,000 Azerbaijanis in all the areas captured. It is no coincidence that in his statement the representative of Armenia failed to mention the Security Council's resolution 853 (1993) on the matter, which clearly condemns the use of force against Azerbaijan. We demand clear and consistent communication from Armenia, in accordance with the post-conflict normalization process.

**The Chair:** We have heard the last speaker for this meeting.

Delegations are reminded that the deadline for submitting all draft resolutions and decisions is tomorrow at noon. The next meeting of the Committee will be held tomorrow afternoon at 3 p.m. in this conference room to hear from non-governmental organizations and for a debate on the working methods of the Committee and programme planning.

*The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.*