



General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

379th meeting

Tuesday, 5 April 2022, 10 a.m.
New York

Chair: Mr. Mabhongo (South Africa)

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

General exchange of views (continued)

The Chair: In order to maximize the time available to us during the general exchange of views segment, I propose that we maintain the practice of using a rolling list of speakers, which is currently open to all delegations wishing to take the floor. I would also like to remind all delegations that have already inscribed their names on the list to keep in mind that a rolling list implies that they should be prepared to intervene at any time, possibly even sooner than they had originally planned to speak.

I would also like to remind delegations that we will follow the established format for the length of statements, that is, 13 minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of groups and 8 minutes for delegations making statements in their national capacity.

Ms. McIntyre (Australia): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Ambassador Mabhongo, on assuming your role as Chair of the Disarmament Commission — a position that Australia was pleased to occupy during the previous formal session of the Commission in 2018. We are pleased to see that role pass to you and your able leadership, and I assure you of my delegation's full support.

As the main sponsor of decision 76/518, Australia is pleased to see the Commission getting back on track this year and resuming its important role as a forum for discussion on disarmament issues. The Commission plays an important role in generating ideas and building

consensus on concrete proposals in the international security system. We are hopeful that this body can resume its work this year with renewed focus and determination following our unplanned break and build on the good work that was carried out in 2018.

As many delegations have said, our work is taking place under the dark shadow cast by Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine, in gross violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Australia reiterates its call on Russia to stop that egregious violation and immediately withdraw its forces from Ukrainian territory. I also wish to take this opportunity to reiterate Australia's full support for Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity. Russia's actions raise issues of central relevance to the work of this body. Russia's nuclear posturing is unprovoked and unnecessarily escalatory. It is a clear demonstration of the dangers that nuclear weapons pose to us all and shows that there is an urgent need for practical progress to be made on nuclear risk reduction, nuclear arms control and nuclear disarmament.

Australia is deeply concerned about the continuing development of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In particular, we condemn that country's continued launching of ballistic missiles, in flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from provocations and make a sustained commitment to engaging in talks with the relevant parties.

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Australia welcomed the joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races in January, which reaffirmed the futility and far-reaching consequences of nuclear war. But words must be followed by actions. We remind Russia about that and call on it to respect its commitment.

Australia remains firmly committed to the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. We believe that efforts to achieve that goal must be both practical and feasible. As we advocated in the Commission in 2018, it is Australia's view that the Disarmament Commission would best serve us in advancing our shared goals by focusing its deliberations on discrete topics. That is how it has succeeded in making important contributions in the past. In 2018, we made the argument that the focus of Working Group I should be nuclear risk reduction. We continue to view that as a useful focus for our work. We will share further thoughts on the contribution the Commission can make in that regard during our Working Group I sessions.

With regard to Working Group II, others have noted that since this body last met the First Committee adopted resolution 76/231, on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. Transparency and confidence-building measures are a fundamental component of that responsible-behaviours approach. By adopting and implementing a strong regime of such measures, States can have greater confidence about the actions of others in outer space, thereby reducing the possibility of miscalculation. We look forward to exploring those issues further over the coming sessions of Working Group II.

The security environment in which we currently find ourselves demands that we make every effort to make real progress on disarmament issues. The Commission can rely on Australia to play a constructive role in its work.

Mr. Yakut (Turkey): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, as well as the Vice-Chairs and the Chairs of Working Groups I and II on your and their election. I should like to assure you, Sir, of my delegation's full cooperation and support for your efforts. I also wish to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her opening remarks yesterday (see A/CN.10/PV.377).

Turkey welcomes the resumption of the United Nations Disarmament Commission's (UNDC) formal session after a three-year hiatus. The Commission plays

an important role as the sole specialized deliberative subsidiary body of the General Assembly that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues. Maintaining the functionality of the Commission is vital to ensuring a robust disarmament machinery.

Unfortunately, we meet this year under particularly challenging circumstances, marked by heightened geopolitical tensions and an ongoing war at the heart of Europe. We consider the military aggression against Ukraine to be unacceptable and firmly reject it. Turkey has been making intensive efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the current crisis. In addition, the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction persists and chemical weapons continue to be used with impunity, while the hard-won achievements of the arms-control and disarmament architecture are under enormous strain.

In the light of those challenges, our work here in the UNDC has become all the more important. The fact that we reached consensus on at least one of the agenda items in the previous cycle should give us hope of achieving a tangible outcome during our deliberations in the current session. The issues on our agenda, namely, nuclear disarmament, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, are highly pertinent for global security.

With regard to the first agenda item, Turkey shares the concerns regarding the possible use of nuclear weapons and is fully committed to our shared goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We attach great importance to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which we see as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

Turkey underlines the importance of the full implementation, further strengthening and universalization of the NPT and its three pillars. That is critical, as the Treaty has increasingly come under strain owing to the current deterioration of the international security environment, as well as worrisome developments such as expanding nuclear arsenals and the new challenges posed by emerging technologies. As such, reaffirming the inherent value and relevance of the Treaty is particularly important. Genuine dialogue and cooperation among the States parties to the NPT is also of the utmost importance. Turkey is committed

to pursuing a systematic, progressive, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament, in accordance with article VI of the NPT. We call on all States possessing nuclear weapons to take further practical steps in that direction.

Moreover, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remains a top priority. We once again encourage all remaining States to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. Turkey reaffirms its commitment to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. Furthermore, we recognize the serious proliferation challenges that continue to threaten international security and reiterate the urgent need to find peaceful and diplomatic solutions. The tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT is only four months away, and any meaningful progress we make here will certainly have a positive impact on the Review Conference.

With regard to the second agenda item, Turkey believes it timely that the UNDC consider transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities. We believe that there is room for advancing towards consensus. Outer space is the common heritage of humanity and a driver of socioeconomic development for the benefit of all people. Space activities must be carried out in conformity with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation.

Turkey supports initiatives and the exploration of non-binding measures aimed at addressing the legal gaps in, and challenges to, achieving the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. We attach great importance to the exploration and use of space for exclusively peaceful purposes. To that end, we have created a long-term national programme with a view to developing our own space technology.

Peace and security in outer space can be achieved only through the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We need to increase international cooperation and establish standards of responsible State behaviour in outer space. In that context, we welcome the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours and look forward to engaging in productive discussions during its first substantive session next month.

In conclusion, we hope that we will be able to make progress towards producing concrete recommendations during the current cycle. Let us work together to fulfil our mandate and restore the UNDC's essential role within the disarmament machinery. Turkey stands ready to contribute to rebuilding trust and an environment of dialogue, which are essential to that end.

Mr. Choffat (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor during the current session of the Disarmament Commission, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on having assumed the chairmanship of the Commission and to assure you of my delegation's full support.

Switzerland condemns the Russian military aggression against Ukraine in the strongest terms. It is a grave violation of international law and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. We also condemn Belarus's participation in that Russian aggression. We call for the immediate cessation of all hostilities and the withdrawal without delay of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory. Switzerland also calls on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and reminds them of their obligation to protect civilian life and infrastructure. Switzerland expresses its full solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

The current geopolitical tensions underscore the importance of multilateralism. Switzerland commends the fact that the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) can now return to meet at the United Nations following a three-year hiatus. As one of the principal organs mandated by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the UNDC is a symbol of multilateralism. It is our responsibility to make it a body that can provide solutions.

I should like to make the following remarks regarding the two items on the Commission's agenda. With regard to nuclear disarmament, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. While much progress has been made in fulfilling those obligations, we continue to face worrisome challenges. We have seen an increase in the ceiling of nuclear arsenals and their modernization. The role played by nuclear weapons in the security strategies and doctrines of the nuclear-weapons States appears to be increasing. Progress has not materialized in reducing the operational readiness

of nuclear-weapon systems. Furthermore, we are faced with a disintegration of the mechanisms for controlling nuclear weapons. Only one instrument remains in force in that regard, namely, the New START Treaty.

With regard to Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, we are faced with a military attack by a nuclear-weapon State against a non-nuclear-weapon State, with the former availing itself of its nuclear umbrella. The security guarantees that Ukraine received in return for renouncing its nuclear arsenal in 1994 have not been respected. That non-compliance with the Budapest Memorandum gives rise to fundamental issues and further reinforces the notion that there is a differential or privileged status enjoyed by the nuclear-weapon States and not the non-nuclear-weapon States, with all of the related implications in terms of nuclear non-proliferation.

Such developments and their accompanying rhetoric underscore the importance of focusing our attention on nuclear risk reduction. Significant substantive work has been carried out in that regard under the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament. We believe that the UNDC should take up that issue and make concrete recommendations in order to reduce the risks of the intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons.

Switzerland believes that transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities are essential for strengthening international security and reducing the risk of escalation. Such measures include information-sharing, in particular on national military policies and programmes in outer space; the advance notification of missile launches and space launches and orbital manoeuvres and proximity operations; as well as the registration of space objects in a national register or with the United Nations. The Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours provides an important opportunity to discuss and make progress on those and other issues.

The lack of trust that currently dominates international relations is a reminder of the importance of the UNDC and represents an opportunity for this high forum to take measures that could serve to restore a sense of trust among its members.

Ms. Kesse Antwi (Ghana): My delegation joins previous speakers in warmly congratulating you, Mr. Chair, as well as the Vice-Chairs and the Chairs of the Working Groups, on your and their well-deserved

elections. We assure you of the support and cooperation of my delegation.

Ghana associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.377). We would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Fifty years after the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the risk of a nuclear arms race and the existential threat posed by the accidental or intentional use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction prevails. It is common knowledge that the effects of a detonation of a nuclear weapon would lead to a staggering number of deaths and a staggering amount of destruction, which would inflict immediate, irreversible damage to human lives and the environment. Worse still, those effects are famously long-lasting and have devastating consequences for human health, the environment and our economies. My delegation is therefore concerned that the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains a central but elusive objective.

Several States have pronounced themselves in support of prioritizing the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Many have also despaired of the current impasse of the United Nations disarmament machinery. However, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) has yet to agree, approve and implement its programme of work, while the implementation of agreed commitments under treaties such as the NPT remains unbalanced, and other treaties, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), are yet to enter into force. In that regard, we call on States that have yet to ratify the CTBT to do so without further delay.

While the impasse in the work programme of the Conference on Disarmament continues, other forums and conventions have produced results — even of a binding nature — among the same States that are represented at the CD. Treaties that advance similar goals to the CD, such as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Arms Trade Treaty, have been adopted and have entered into force following negotiations among States, international organizations and civil society.

We urge States to address the existing challenges in order to reach consensus on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, within a specified

time frame, in order for the CD to overcome its long-standing deadlock and to start substantive work. In that regard, my delegation looks forward to the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT and strongly advocates a renewal of international commitment to the Treaty, which remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime

We also recognize the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as an important and concrete contribution to nuclear disarmament. For that reason, we welcome the renewed efforts to seek a common way forward towards the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We call on all States in the region to show political will and flexibility in order to bridge divergent views.

We implore all stakeholders, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to fulfil their long-standing and overdue disarmament obligations for the collective security of all States, rather than engaging in strategic nuclear competition and introducing new concepts, conditions and varied interpretations of the Treaty's provisions in order to promote myopic security doctrines and to maintain the relevance of their nuclear-weapons stockpiles. Such actions run contrary to the objectives of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Ghana advocates a universal and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear or other nuclear explosive devices. We maintain that the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty remains critical in view of its potential benefits for strengthening the non-proliferation regime and reducing the risk of nuclear terrorism. We also welcome the entry into force, in January 2021, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which we believe provides a prudent legal pathway towards eliminating nuclear weapons. Ghana was among the first countries to sign that landmark Treaty when it opened for signature, and our country's ratification process is under way.

My delegation reiterates its long-standing view that nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear security must not be misused so as to violate, deny or restrict the inalienable right of States to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

On the issue of outer space, Ghana reaffirms its commitment to the Outer Space Treaty and the Charter of the United Nations, which together serve as the essential legal framework for maintaining peace and security in the space environment. We also wish to echo the calls for the CD to resume substantive work and negotiations on agreed priority areas, including the proposed treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We believe that outer space must be free of nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction and indeed all other kinds of weapons, as their presence in outer space constitutes an existential threat to global peace and the future survival of humankind. There is a need for initiatives that will increase confidence and mutual trust through legally binding instruments or voluntary norms so as to establish standards of responsible behaviour across the broad spectrum of space activities.

In conclusion, we reiterate that a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought by anyone. The only guarantee to avoid the far-reaching havoc of such weapons is to completely eliminate them in a transparent, irreversible and verifiable manner. We also wish to express our full support for the United Nations Disarmament Commission and look forward to engaging constructively with other Member States during the substantive session ahead.

Mr. Alateek (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election to the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission this year. We are confident in your ability to successfully steer the work of the Commission and achieve the results to which Member States aspire. We would also like to congratulate the representatives of Jamaica and Hungary on their election as Chairs of the Working Groups. We also wish to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing yesterday (see A/CN.10/PV.377).

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Egypt, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.377).

Our meeting today comes after a two-year hiatus that has disrupted the Commission's work, and at a time when our world is witnessing an increase in challenges and threats to international peace and security. The

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes in the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the deliberative body that is mandated to discuss and make recommendations on disarmament-related topics.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes in the importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and of striking a balance among its three pillars, namely, disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Our country was quick to accede to the NPT with a view to contributing to international efforts aimed at achieving the universality of the Treaty and the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as stipulated in article VI of the Treaty. Moreover, we believe that peace and security cannot be achieved through the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. We look forward to participating in the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, which is scheduled to take place in New York in August.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is of the view that the first step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is to urgently support the establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction around the world, in particular in the Middle East region. Possessing weapons of mass destruction will not bring security or prosperity to the peoples of the region. Achieving development, progress and prosperity requires cooperation and that we refrain from engaging in arms races. It is regrettable that the Middle East region remains intractable to international and regional efforts to establish it as a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, despite the availability of the necessary ingredients to achieve that goal.

In that regard, we recall that previous NPT Review Conferences have called on Israel — as the only State in the Middle East still outside the Treaty — to accede to it without delay and subject all its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to contribute to maintaining peace, stability and security for all peoples of the region.

In that context, my country emphasizes that the 1995 resolution on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains in force until its goals and

objectives have been achieved. The Arab States agreed to the indefinite extension of the NPT in exchange for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region. We would also like to underscore the importance of the outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on the denuclearization of the Middle East.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia commends the efforts made by the sisterly State of Kuwait during its presidency of the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which was held in 2021, as well as the efforts undertaken by the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan during its presidency of the first session of the Conference in 2019.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is of the view that reaching a solution on the Iranian nuclear dossier is an important step if we are to achieve security, stability and understanding among the countries of the region. Iran's continuing enrichment of uranium in quantities beyond the permissible threshold poses a threat to the security of the countries of the region. My country is working to ensure that the negotiations under way in Vienna lead to a binding agreement that addresses the current shortcomings, in particular with regard to Iran's negative practices and dangerous ballistic-missile programme, in order to ensure the peaceful nature of that programme and to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stresses the importance of the use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes. Space technology must not be used for non-peaceful purposes or for developing technology for use in ballistic missiles. The relevant international agreements have played a positive role in promoting the peaceful use of outer space and regulating States' activities and behaviours in it, taking into consideration that outer space is the common heritage of humankind and that efforts to control outer-space activities must not restrict each State's inherent right to the peaceful use of outer space. We also welcome the establishment of an open-ended working group aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space. My country looks forward to working and cooperating with Member States in the open-ended working group.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hopes that the meetings of the Disarmament Commission will bear fruit in the coming weeks by making

recommendations that will contribute to reviving international efforts on disarmament. We assure the Commission of our support in that regard.

Mr. Bae (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to join other delegations in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission this year. I also wish to extend my congratulations to all members of the Bureau on their election and assure them of my delegation's full support for the successful work of the Commission. I also warmly welcome the resumption of the Commission after a three-year-long hiatus and appreciate everyone's efforts in making today's meeting possible.

The Commission is finally gathered here today with a renewed will to tackle two core issues in relation to disarmament and non-proliferation, namely, nuclear weapons and outer-space activities. A world free of nuclear weapons is an aspiration cherished by all humankind. Despite the enormous efforts undertaken towards that goal and some of the positive results that we have achieved over the past year, it is regrettable that certain recent grave events have overshadowed our hopes for a better future.

The Russian Federation's recent rhetoric regarding its nuclear weapons is alarming to all of us. Those words renege on commitments previously undertaken, including the joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races, which was issued earlier this year. The Republic of Korea condemns in the strongest terms Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine and joins the international community in support of Ukraine. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea calls on Russia — the country that possesses the largest global stockpile of nuclear weapons — to refrain from dangerous and irresponsible nuclear rhetoric.

The recent activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are no less worrisome. In flagrant violation of multiple Security Council resolutions, North Korea continues to launch ballistic missiles. Furthermore, the recently released satellite images showing the restoration of the country's nuclear-test site, its ongoing nuclear-related activities and the recent instructions of its leader to develop more powerful nuclear-strike means are deeply concerning. Such actions pose a serious threat to the Korean peninsula, the Asia-Pacific region and the wider international community. They also constitute a significant threat

to the global non-proliferation regime and must stop immediately.

We strongly urge North Korea to refrain from further provocations. Contrary to what that country believes, provocations will not relieve it of its security concerns. They will instead serve only to aggravate those concerns and incur stern responses. We also call on North Korea to fulfil its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions and to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Republic of Korea and the United States with a view to achieving the denuclearization of, and lasting peace on, the Korean peninsula.

The Republic of Korea stresses that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime should remain the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. We should therefore focus on making full use of this year's Working Group I to lay the groundwork for tangible outcomes at the upcoming tenth NPT Review Conference. Furthermore, we should spare no effort in bridging the gap and deepening the common understanding and trust between the nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States.

The Republic of Korea remains actively committed to pursuing practical measures such as creating an environment for nuclear disarmament and adopting the stepping-stones approach established by the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament. We believe that negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty should start as soon as possible. The long-overdue entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should not be overlooked, either. The Republic of Korea remains committed, ready and willing to cooperate closely with its partners on those fundamental issues. We also attach great importance to the peaceful resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue and support all related diplomatic efforts.

In promoting practical transparency and confidence-building measures in outer-space activities, ensuring a safe, secure and sustainable space environment has emerged as a matter of shared interest and a goal for all humankind. We live in a new space era, in which technology is rapidly advancing and the number of actors in both the public and private sector is increasing. It is therefore evident that space threats and the risks posed by more congested, contested

and competitive space activities are growing at an unprecedented pace.

Moreover, given the dual-use nature of space technology, it is not easy for States to be certain about the intentions of the space activities carried out by others, which could lead to miscalculation, the escalation of tensions and even contribute to a new arms race. We therefore believe that the lingering mistrust and lack of communication among different parties with various perspectives should be addressed as a priority task with a view to preventing an arms race in outer space.

Resolution 76/231, on responsible behaviours in outer space, allows us to navigate a secure outer space by reducing space threats. The Republic of Korea co-sponsored and fully supports that resolution. My delegation also welcomes the launching of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, which was established pursuant to resolution 76/231. Given the rapid increase in space activities by Governments and the private sector alike, we would like to emphasize the importance of the participation of all stakeholders in order to ensure a fruitful discussion in that regard.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my delegation's support for the success of this year's session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. I look forward to employing our collective reason in engaging in constructive discussions over the coming three weeks.

Mrs. Nguyen (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to join other delegations in congratulating you, Sir, on the assumption of the chairmanship of the Commission. I assure you of my delegation's full support.

Viet Nam aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the representative of Cambodia, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/CN.10/PV.377).

The United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) has a long history of discussing various issues under the disarmament agenda. This year's substantive session of the UNDC has been convened in a timely manner, following a two-year delay caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and against the backdrop of increasing political tension around the

world. The convening of this year's session is a precious opportunity for States Members of the United Nations to strengthen dialogue and exchange views in order to ensure better mutual understanding and trust.

With regard to the issue of nuclear weapons, Viet Nam reaffirms its consistent policy to support every effort on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament with a view to achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. In that regard, we note the recent developments that have given rise to international concern about the increasing threat of nuclear weapons and their status in strategic doctrines.

As Member States prepare for the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we believe that political will, good-faith negotiations, transparency and inclusiveness are important to the success of the Review Conference. In addition, we look forward to seeing more vigorous commitments to, and the implementation of, regional nuclear-weapon-free zones. Viet Nam also calls on all parties to fully implement their obligations under article VI of the Treaty. At the same time, it is also important to facilitate the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We call on the remaining annex 2 States to consider joining the Treaty so that we can further strengthen the existing nuclear-test-ban regime.

We welcome the historic entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which is the successful outcome of the tireless efforts undertaken during the more than 70 years of the international community striving for disarmament and the prohibition of nuclear weapons. In accordance with article 2 of the Treaty, Viet Nam submitted a declaration to the Secretary-General on 19 February 2021 confirming that it does not own, possess or control nuclear weapons, has never done so and does not host any other State's nuclear weapons on its territory. We look forward to the first meeting of the States parties to the TPNW, which will be held in Vienna this year. In that regard, the wider participation of Member States in existing international legal instruments, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, is crucial to the operation and effectiveness of the global nuclear regime.

With regard to outer space, Viet Nam recognizes that access to outer space is the inalienable right of all States. The exploration and use of outer space must be based on the principle of peaceful purposes for the benefit of all humankind and must be carried out in accordance with the fundamental principles of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The prevention of an arms race in outer space and its weaponization is of vital importance. Failing to do so will be detrimental to the use of outer space by developing countries for various purposes, as well as to the maintenance of international peace and security. Viet Nam therefore welcomes the adoption of resolution 76/231, which established an open-ended working group to discuss current and future threats by States to space systems and make recommendations on possible norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours relating to threats by States to space systems. It is also our expectation that States engage constructively in appropriate transparency and confidence-building measures in outer-space activities. We therefore share the approach of the Secretary-General, in accordance with the proposal in his *Our Common Agenda* report (A/75/982), that we need to establish further principles regarding conduct in outer space.

The lack of deliberation owing to the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed progress on issues on the Disarmament Commission's agenda. However, reaching consensus or compromise on such issues is not out of our hands, given everything that the Commission achieved a few years ago. There will be opportunities for us, through goodwill and joint efforts, to contribute collectively to multilateral work and common solutions to international issues of mutual concern. With that in mind, Viet Nam reiterates its commitment to engaging constructively in the discussions of the UNDC in order to contribute to the success of the Commission this year and beyond.

Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka): Sri Lanka congratulates the delegation of South Africa on having assumed the chairmanship of the Commission and appreciates the commendable contribution made by the outgoing Chair, Australia. I assure you, Sir, and the newly elected members of the Bureau of the full support of my delegation in discharging the responsibilities bestowed on you and them by the General Assembly.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.377).

Sri Lanka wishes to underscore the importance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) in contributing to the core of the disarmament machinery, which gives significance to various problems in the field of disarmament and considers elements that could draw out a comprehensive programme of action through a context-specific lens. In that context, Sri Lanka believes that driving the discussions in order to deliver results-oriented and viable recommendations for action could tangibly serve to depict global realities. We support initiatives that seek to strike a balance by incorporating a full range of opinions with flexibility and achieve concrete and tangible results. Sri Lanka also wishes to underscore that progress has been slow in accomplishing our intended goals since the 1999 session of the UNDC. In the light of that, we believe that the current session should strive to deliver a set of substantive recommendations in order to achieve universal peace and security.

Disarmament and arms control are envisaged as an integral part of the collective security system set out in the Charter of the United Nations, which was designed to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Since 1945, disarmament efforts have been pursued with a view to negotiating a reduction in armaments among all States so as to avert recourse to the use of force in international relations. In practice, however, the maintenance and restoration of international peace and security has required the efficient maintenance of forces. Whereas disarmament relates to the reduction and even the total abolition of a category of weapons, arms control was developed in the context of nuclear deterrence, which characterized the polarized approaches that were adopted by the super Powers during the confrontation of the Cold War. It would not be far wrong to suggest that the same tensions still exist today in what I would describe as a time of "cold peace", which is said to be on the edge of an abyss.

Given that the conventions relating to arms control aim to stabilize the security environment and that such agreements include measures concerning agreed limitations on certain armaments and freezing the number of arms at an agreed level, the desired outcome was that cooperation, reciprocity and inclusiveness would reduce the risk of a surprise or accidental attack.

I would argue that it is the task of the Disarmament Commission to ensure that there continues to be a strong call for disarmament, which would be an appropriate outcome of a broad strategy for peace.

The Charter of the United Nations recognizes that there is a correlation between the number of armaments and the establishment of international peace and security. The actions that have been undertaken to date, however, often relate to the regulation of arms rather than disarmament. In that regard, we must take into account that the United Nations Charter does not impose on Member States the obligation to reduce their armaments, which is an aspect we need to tackle tenaciously, as the planet faces the peril of the ultimate disaster of the complete destruction of life on Earth — our only home.

We should also appreciate that the General Assembly has a monopoly position with regard to disarmament. Its various measures have contributed to successes in specific areas, but they have also resulted in the reduced efficacy of the numerous and often redundant resolutions owing to a lack of clarity and, at times, less than coherent messages, which is another aspect that requires our attention.

Today nuclear weapons remain an existential threat to all humankind. As the current session gets under way, the Disarmament Commission is entering a challenging and intense time in the global arena. Sri Lanka believes that the Disarmament Commission has the potential to issue a strong message to the world by building on its intended action through the existing disarmament machinery. We believe that can be achieved by producing actionable results, reaching consensus that leads to progress and addressing new and acute challenges in important areas.

It is important that we dedicate our fullest efforts to make progress on multiple questions simultaneously. We need to tackle the new trends and technologies that threaten the stability of the world. This universal body must ensure transparency and unity on matters of strategic security and build and nourish solutions to issues through dialogue, which is needed in order to strike a balance among contrasting views. The UNDC should therefore continue its deliberations so as to ensure that the world is free from conflict.

Sri Lanka attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. It is therefore imperative that we find concrete results to

the most acute challenges that lie ahead in the current UNDC cycle. Such challenges include weapons of mass destruction and threats in outer space, which have increased drastically. Against that backdrop, building international cooperation and diplomacy is vital if we are to secure peace and security. Sri Lanka is of the view that the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons serves as a forum to implement balanced, concrete steps on disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of peaceful uses. As the country that submits, together with Egypt, the First Committee's annual resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, we regard that forum as an important platform to find convergence on critical issues.

Strengthening the disarmament regime remains key in order to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Sri Lanka recognizes the importance that Member States undertake concrete measures to bolster national and international efforts to eliminate the threats posed by conventional weapons.

Sri Lanka hopes that the current substantive session of the Disarmament Commission will deliver constructive deliberations, which are imperative to underscore the role played by the United Nations Disarmament Commission as an important organ dedicated to advocating the disarmament machinery in order to strengthen peace, stability and security in the world.

Mr. Tun (Myanmar): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its current substantive session. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in working towards a fruitful outcome at this session. I also wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her statement (see A/CN.10/PV.377).

Myanmar aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, respectively (see A/CN.10/PV.377). Allow me to apprise the Commission of the following points in my national capacity.

We reaffirm our position regarding nuclear disarmament and our commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Given that nuclear threats are the most serious security challenge and that they put at risk the existence of humankind, we

must not overlook the existence of nuclear weapons and their deployment or threat thereof. We believe that the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their complete elimination. We therefore welcome any initiatives, no matter how large or small, that aim to achieve nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Given the recent developments in the international peace and security arena, we share the view of Mrs. Nakamitsu that the possession of nuclear weapons endangers our collective security.

We wish to underscore that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the linchpin of the nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. We urge all Member States to fully comply with their obligations under the Treaty. Moreover, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is the quintessential instrument for reinforcing the norms against nuclear weapons. The entry into force of the Treaty on 22 January 2021 represents welcome progress and a crucial achievement for the nuclear-disarmament agenda. Myanmar signed the TPNW in September 2018, but unfortunately our planned ratification of the Treaty was thwarted by the illegal military coup in our country in 2021. We sincerely hope to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones can also help consolidate our collective efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

For many developing countries, access to outer space is limited by pre-existing priorities and has been made even more challenging by the coronavirus disease pandemic. However, the military doctrines and technologies capable of militarizing and weaponizing space already exist, with implications that could affect all of us. We believe that, given the accelerating progress in new space technologies and capabilities, their potential military applications in space might subsequently lead to an arms race in that domain if we do not endeavour to ensure the use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes. It is only a matter of time before more countries have greater access to outer space, and their inalienable rights in space must be based on using it for exclusively peaceful purposes.

We believe the Arms Trade Treaty is instrumental in strengthening accountability in the conventional arms trade. We wish to underscore that strong and effective controls in the arms trade can help protect many innocent lives worldwide. Most human suffering associated

with such weapons is rooted in their irresponsible use by people in power and the indiscriminate killing of innocent people.

The situations in Myanmar and Ukraine are the result of the irresponsible use of weapons by people in power. However, the big difference is that the people in Myanmar are suffering dreadfully amid the indiscriminate attacks and excessive use of force by their own military, whereas the people in Ukraine are suffering due to aggression and an unprovoked war.

We fully share the suffering of the people of Ukraine. We stand firm and in solidarity with them. We reiterate our call for the immediate and complete cessation of hostilities in, and attacks on, Ukraine. We also call on Member States to provide timely and decisive support for the people of Myanmar, who continue to face horrifying suffering as a consequence of the atrocities and crimes against humanity committed by the country's military. The people of Myanmar have been suffering for more than a year, and they desperately need immediate and decisive action, as well as much stronger levels of support from the international community, in order to save people from becoming victims of the military's crimes against humanity.

By using imported weapons and lethal military hardware, the military of Myanmar is brutally attacking and killing its own people. It is conducting massive air strikes and using heavy artillery and excessive force against innocent civilians in an indiscriminate manner. I therefore call on States that export weapons to the Myanmar military to stop selling to them immediately, as called for by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. I also appeal to all Member States to work together to prohibit the sale of weapons and associated technologies to the Myanmar military and to block all possible ways through which it could acquire weapons. Blocking the military from accessing weapons will save the lives of innocent people in Myanmar.

Mr. Dandy (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its current substantive session, as well as the representatives of Jamaica and Hungary on their elections as Chairs of the two Working Groups.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/

PV.377). I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

The Syrian Arab Republic believes in multilateralism in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and supports promoting it. We therefore underscore the central role of the Disarmament Commission as the specialized body of the United Nations mandated to consider disarmament issues and make recommendations to the General Assembly. My country also reaffirms the importance of bolstering international efforts to address the challenges and risks in the international arena, including through the implementation of relevant bilateral and multilateral commitments.

The unprecedented terrorist war that my country, Syria, has been subjected to for more than 11 years has clearly demonstrated the magnitude of the threat posed by terrorist organizations possessing, developing, stockpiling and using weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, which requires concerted international efforts to counter such a serious threat, without the politicization or misinformation practiced by some Member States to serve their own self-interests.

The Syrian Arab Republic attaches great importance to the establishment of zones free of all weapons of mass destruction, since such zones constitute an essential contribution to achieving disarmament objectives and strengthening the non-proliferation regime. That is why my country was keen to make progress in making the Middle East a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, which would contribute to the goal of maintaining regional and international peace and security.

However, Israel's continued modernization and expansion of its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction and its possession and development of nuclear military programmes and capabilities, with the help of certain countries, clearly violate its relevant international obligations and pose a threat to peace and security in the Middle East region. Israel's continued undermining of a key pillar of the non-proliferation regime by refusing to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear party and subject its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as its obstructing the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, on which the indefinite extension

of the NPT was based, demonstrates a clear disregard for the international and regional will to establish such a zone in the Middle East.

It is important to emphasize that Israel's continued reckless behaviour would not have been possible without the umbrella of protection provided by the United States — the depositary State of the NPT and one of the three countries that sponsored the 1995 resolution — through its policies aimed at protecting Israel's interests and ensuring its military superiority in the region. The adoption of decision 73/546, entitled "Convening a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction", and the convening of two successful sessions of the Conference, are a clear indication of the efforts undertaken by all States in the region, except Israel, to establish such a zone. Yet Israel still refuses to participate in the Conference.

Syria maintains its adherence to the NPT as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and the basis for achieving international stability and security. We also emphasize that the three pillars of the Treaty are equally important and that its provisions should not be implemented selectively. We also reiterate that the inalienable right of States to access nuclear knowledge and technology for peaceful purposes must not be restricted, in accordance with article IV of the Treaty. The Syrian Arab Republic looks forward to the convening of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT in August and hopes it will provide a genuine opportunity to reach consensus on a comprehensive document to ensure the implementation of the commitments and pledges set out in the final documents and resolutions of previous Review Conferences, in particular the implementation of the 1995 Middle East resolution, which was adopted as part of a deal for the indefinite extension of the NPT, which will remain in force until it is implemented.

Turning to the agenda item on recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space with a view to preventing an arms race there, Syria emphasizes that outer space is the common heritage and interest of all humankind and underscores the legitimate sovereign right of all States to explore and use outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes, as well as the importance of preventing an arms race in outer space or its transformation into an arena of war and armed conflict. In that context, my delegation supports

the development of a legally binding and verifiable instrument on preventing an arms race in outer space. We also support the joint initiative by Russia and China contained in the draft treaty submitted to the Conference on Disarmament on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer-space objects, which provides a sound basis for further discussions on that issue.

In conclusion, we assure the Disarmament Commission of our full support during the current substantive session with a view to formulating comprehensive and balanced recommendations that meet the concerns of all Member States, which would serve to ensure the success of the session.

Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Paraguay would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at this substantive session and wishes you every success in resuming our work after a four-year hiatus. We would also like to extend our congratulations to the members of the Bureau, our colleagues from Jamaica and Hungary, and the Secretariat. We reiterate our commitment to contributing positively to achieving the desired results in the deliberations and work that lies ahead in the coming weeks, in this second year of the cycle that will end in 2023, as agreed at our meeting yesterday (see A/CN.10/PV.376).

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for having shared her clear message yesterday, which reaffirmed the importance of overcoming the challenge that lies ahead and producing concrete and pragmatic recommendations on issues of the utmost importance for our international disarmament agenda, including nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space, by making use of the platform provided by this specialized, deliberative and universal body within the multilateral disarmament machinery.

As has been mentioned by many delegations who have spoken before us, the current situation at the global level sees us facing frequent threats to international peace and security. Moreover, the worrisome and sad events of recent weeks have drawn scrutiny to our Organization, as well as the legal order we created 76 years ago and the very functioning of the multilateral

system. Those issues have been further aggravated by the threat of the use of nuclear weapons.

We therefore renew our confidence in the multilateral disarmament mechanism, which has always played an important role in building trust. As Mrs. Nakamitsu said yesterday, “Now is not the moment to abandon dialogue and diplomacy” (A/CN.10/PV.377, p. 3). Despite any remarks that may be made on our part in favour or against certain measures, we hope our work can achieve the same outcome as in 2017, when we adopted recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, in order to break years of deadlock on nuclear disarmament. In that regard, we hope our work will take place in a constructive environment and garner the broadest possible consensus in order to agree on concrete recommendations on the two items on our agenda.

As part of the first densely populated zone free of nuclear weapons, created by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Paraguay once again reaffirms its unwavering commitment to strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, as well as to any initiatives designed for that purpose within the United Nations.

Furthermore, we advocate transparent, irreversible, verifiable and legally binding nuclear disarmament for all States. We support the universalization and fulfilment of commitments on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In that regard, it should be noted that — in the same way that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of global non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy — the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) marks a milestone in the evolution of international law, since it is based on the recognition of the human suffering caused by the use of nuclear weapons and its catastrophic consequences for human health, the economy and the environment, which lends a new humanitarian approach to nuclear disarmament.

As a historic agreement to which my country is a party, the TPNW marks a momentous step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, because it not only places the elimination of such weapons in a legal, long-lasting and binding framework that contributes to nuclear disarmament — the first of its kind — but it is also complemented by other international instruments,

such as the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

With that in mind, we welcome the efforts undertaken to align the international agenda on disarmament, which will enable the convening of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons this year, as well as the first meeting of the States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We hope that the recommendations that emanate from the current cycle of meetings, which are a prelude to both of the aforementioned relevant international meetings, will move in the same direction so as to strengthen the final documents to be issued by those forums.

As a member of the international community and a new space stakeholder and space-faring nation, Paraguay reiterates its recognition of the rights and benefits derived from the exclusively peaceful use of outer space and its sustainable use for the benefit of all humankind. In that respect, Paraguay underscores the importance of space law as a fundamental pillar in designing outer-space policy so that such policies seek to guarantee the responsible, safe and sustainable use of the applications provided by space technology, thereby strengthening international cooperation and fostering relationships based on transparency and reliability in outer-space activities.

My country also calls for the prevention of an arms race in outer space and emphasizes the need to achieve a legally binding and appropriate regime that guarantees the aspirations of all members of the international community in matters relating to that common heritage of humankind. We therefore recognize the importance of incorporating into our work the issue of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer-space activities.

In conclusion, I would like to renew my delegation's commitment to contributing constructively to the deliberations of the Commission's two Working Groups and to help respond to the major challenges we face in the international community.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): First of all, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your and their elections.

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.377).

The current substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission is taking place after three-year hiatus and at an important inflection point in world history. For the past several years, Pakistan and several other countries have warned of the gathering storm eroding global security, including growing political and military tensions in various regions; new and expanding military blocs; the erosion of long-standing arms-control agreements; a new and comprehensive arms race that has been under way for well over a decade, during which time huge arsenals of advanced conventional and strategic weapons have been developed and deployed; questions regarding the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence in aggressive war-fighting doctrines, including, for example, the quest for a conventional war under the nuclear overhang and the development of so-called usable nuclear weapons being integrated into war-fighting doctrines.

Now, under the weight of renewed great-Power tensions, unresolved disputes and burgeoning military expenditures and deployments, the global security order has virtually collapsed. The Charter of the United Nations and international law are in tatters. We share the anguish of the victims of war. However, we cannot help but observe that such circumstances might not have come to pass had the principles of the United Nations Charter and humanitarian law been observed universally and consistently, especially during the past more than 20 years, during which time conflicts proliferated across the Middle East and elsewhere, principally owing to foreign intervention and interference.

What will emerge in the aftermath of such unrest, conflict and confrontation is unclear, but it will need to be a different and more effective global security order — one that not only restores peace and stability, but also prevents similar conflicts from breaking out in other regions, such as Asia-Pacific, South Asia and the Middle East. To that end, States Members of the United Nations must draw appropriate lessons and conclusions, which should guide us in rebuilding a more durable structure of international peace and security and disarmament.

One initial and obvious conclusion is that we must ensure respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, Security Council resolutions and international law — universally and consistently. Secondly, the legitimate security interests of all States and peoples must be respected. As stated in the Final Document of the first special session of the

General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) (resolution S-10/2), every State has an equal right to security. And global security is indivisible — the use of force, intervention or coercion anywhere affects all nations and peoples everywhere.

Thirdly, the principles of State sovereignty and territorial integrity and the right of peoples to self-determination are at the core of the global order. Violating those principles is the main trigger of war and conflict. They must be consistently respected. Fourthly, when arms are accumulated and alliances formed, it is usually against someone, which adds to the likelihood of tensions and conflict. Yet war is never inevitable and cannot bring durable security or peace. Large countries should take note and not underestimate the determination of smaller neighbours and nations to defend themselves.

Fifthly, peace is always the product of compromise. Negotiations are the only pathway to peace. Referring to the wishes of the people is often the simplest path to conflict resolution. The people of Palestine and Kashmir await the exercise of their right to self-determination. Sixthly, in a complex and multipolar world, the United Nations offers the most inclusive vehicle to build a durable structure of peace, based on the Charter of the United Nations, international law and an effective arms-control and disarmament regime. The structures of the United Nations must not be destroyed at any cost.

There is a clear and present threat to regional and international peace and security in other parts of the world, including in South Asia. That threat emanates from our eastern neighbour's brutal suppression of the people of the Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the aggressive posture it has demonstrated towards Pakistan and its unbridled accumulation of conventional and strategic weapons, which are mostly deployed against my country.

We once again urge the international community not to ignore the threat to peace and security in South Asia. India must halt its massive violations of human rights in occupied Jammu and Kashmir; halt its endeavour to settle Hindus in Kashmir with a view to turning the region's Muslim majority into a minority; and implement the resolutions of the Security Council by prescribing a plebiscite to enable the people of Jammu and Kashmir to determine their own political destiny. The international community, including this body, must call out that wilful defiance of international legality.

A failure to do so entails risks for regional peace and security in a nuclearized South Asia and beyond.

That danger was revealed most starkly by the launching of a supersonic nuclear-capable Indian missile into Pakistan's territory on 9 March. If that was a deliberate provocation, it was a highly reckless and dangerous act. Had Pakistan concluded that it was a nuclear-armed missile, launched in pursuance of the recent Indian threats of a pre-emptive nuclear strike against Pakistan, we might have launched an immediate retaliatory strike. It was only Pakistan's self-restraint that prevented the outbreak of a nuclear conflict between Pakistan and India. It is also testament to Pakistan's effective command and control over its strategic assets and our ability to track India's actions.

Even if the Indian missile launch was accidental, it reveals serious gaps in India's ability to manage its strategic assets. We have proposed a joint investigation in order to establish the facts of that disturbing incident. We have also issued a series of questions to India through the Security Council and the Secretary-General. Let me repeat them here.

India must explain the measures and procedures in place to prevent accidental missile launches and a recurrence of the particular circumstances of that incident. India needs to clearly explain the type and specifications of the missile that landed on Pakistani territory. India also needs to explain the flight path and trajectory of the accidentally launched missile and how it ultimately changed course and entered Pakistan. Was the missile equipped with a self-destruct mechanism, as is customary? Why did it fail to activate?

Are Indian missiles primed for launch even under routine maintenance? Why did India fail to immediately inform Pakistan about the accidental launch of the missile and only acknowledge it after Pakistan had announced the incident and sought clarification? Given the profound level of incompetence it has demonstrated, India needs to explain if the missile launch was indeed handled by its armed forces or certain rogue elements. We are still awaiting India's response. The discussion in the Disarmament Commission provides a good opportunity for India to provide the answers to those questions.

Pakistan advocates building new consensus at the earliest possible opportunity in order to promote universal and equal security for all States through the promotion of regional and global arms control and

disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, based on the SSOD-I Declaration. To that end, Pakistan will continue to support the commencement of negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) without further delay. Pakistan also supports the immediate start of negotiations in the CD on legally binding negative security assurances and a treaty on the prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space.

We are increasingly concerned about the threats posed by anti-satellite capabilities to regional and global stability, as well as to the long-term sustainability of outer space. The potential integration of anti-ballistic missile systems and their components into space assets is another area of concern. The existing gaps in the Outer Space Treaty have grave security implications. They need to be bridged by a treaty that comprehensively prohibits the threat or use of force against outer-space objects and the weaponization of outer space. Notwithstanding the partial value of transparency and confidence-building measures, such voluntary measures cannot be a substitute for treaty-based legal obligations.

Pakistan calls for a fissile material cut-off treaty that reduces existing stocks in a verifiable manner. The fissile material cut-off treaty that has been proposed does not represent a solution to the challenge posed by the unequal and large nuclear arsenals and fissile material stockpiles that have been accumulated by a number of nuclear-possessor States.

Pakistan wishes you, Sir, every success in achieving a concrete and tangible outcome in the work of the Disarmament Commission at this critical time.

Mr. Ilyassov (Kazakhstan): I join other delegations in welcoming the new cycle of work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

In particular, I wish to warmly congratulate Ambassador Xolisa Mabongo of South Africa on assuming the chairmanship of the Commission and to commend the members of the Bureau for their willingness to shoulder such immense responsibility on our behalf. I wish them every success in their important undertaking and assure them of Kazakhstan's full support at all times.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, and her team for their sterling

support for Member States at all times and especially for Kazakhstan in all its initiatives. We hope that the current session will produce successful outcomes, driven by our deep commitment, political will and redoubled determination to seek common ground. Notwithstanding our differences, we have no option but to arrive at tangible recommendations to address the very serious issues before us.

This year Kazakhstan marks its thirtieth anniversary as a member of the United Nations. Since the inception of its statehood, our country has chosen the path of peace, security and sustainable development. First and foremost, I wish to reiterate that, among the many initiatives that Kazakhstan has launched, it remains firmly committed to nuclear disarmament and relentlessly pursues the goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. We believe that our pioneering example of steadfastness to that noble goal should also guide others in striving for a future free of the threat of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Looking back at the history of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we must acknowledge that 50 years have been lost without any significant progress having been made in implementing article VI of that important cornerstone Treaty. That unjustifiably long delay, caused by the nuclear-weapon States, led to the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which Kazakhstan ratified in August 2019. The Treaty strongly signals that the overwhelming majority of the world community is opposed to any further nuclear threats.

We as a world are weary of being stuck at a standstill. Last year the vast majority of States therefore made the first step towards a nuclear-weapon-free future. The second step must now be taken by the nuclear countries and their allies by acceding to the Treaty. Should they fail to do so, we risk the world lapsing into the further disintegration of multilateralism and the loss of global trust and cohesion on issues affecting our survival. The current situation of open and dangerous confrontations around the world bears that fact most clearly. We should have learned from past wars and conflicts that it is impossible for States to ensure their own security by undermining the security of others.

We all remember that in the second half of the twentieth century, as a result of successful negotiations on nuclear security, the nuclear arsenals of the United States and Russia were substantially reduced, and

several constructive steps were taken to put an end to the strife and discord in many parts of the world. However, today we are witnessing the erosion of many of those international security achievements. The most critical factor that is glaringly absent is confidence-building measures, without which the contradictions among the leading Powers could lead them headlong towards new long-term polarization.

At the same time, we are grateful that the issue of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space has been included on the Commission's agenda. It is now high time that we consider global solutions that will prohibit the deployment of lethal weapons in outer space, which could further endanger our already fragile planet. We must understand that there is no planet B.

Another fact that should not escape our attention is that modern technological advances are accelerating at an unprecedented pace, with dramatic effects on humankind. It is therefore all the more necessary that we develop and adopt legally binding international instruments to prohibit the use of scientific discoveries to create new destructive types of weapons of mass destruction, with provisions for tracking and controlling any possible contemporary or future dangerous developments.

In order to form a geography of sustainable peace, my country attaches great importance to the expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In that regard, Kazakhstan has initiated a new proposal to consolidate the efforts of all States that are part of denuclearized zones with a view to ensuring more concerted efforts. It is important to adapt the international disarmament process to current historical conditions. We need a new strategy for the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We need to tackle the elimination of a qualitatively new threat — cybercrime — which has the potential to become the most dangerous weapon in the hands of terrorists. New types of weapons and new technologies can pose an even greater threat if they are combined with nuclear weapons.

The best minds of the twentieth century warned us back then that nuclear weapons could be used in a future world war, leading to the destruction of all life on our planet. That is even more relevant in the twenty-first century, given the heightened disputes, for which no solutions can be provided by military means but instead only by peaceful, mutually respectful and constructive

dialogue, with all countries taking equal responsibility for global peace and security. It is therefore necessary to build holistic and ethical algorithms of action for the world community.

The Disarmament Commission undoubtedly plays an important role in the structure of the multilateral disarmament machinery of the United Nations, and we attach great importance to its work. We are at a crossroads like never before, and we must therefore ensure the Commission's success in making timely and effective recommendations on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Kazakhstan stands ready to work with all countries to achieve our common goal of ensuring a safe and secure world.

I thank you, Mr. Chair, and wish all of us a very productive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I congratulate you, Mr. Chair, the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the two Working Groups on your and their election.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries by the representative of Indonesia (see A/CN.10/PV.377). The full version of my statement will be submitted to the Secretariat.

We note with satisfaction the convening of this substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission after a three-year delay owing to the host country refusing to meet its obligations to issue the necessary visas. The world is currently facing multiple and interlinked global threats and challenges emanating from the existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including nuclear weapons, which pose an existential threat to humankind. That global cause of insecurity should have brought the international community together. Instead we are witnessing the ongoing escalation of political and military tensions, including the continuing threat of the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear countries.

There is a renewed and expanded nuclear-arms race in which outer space, cybertechnologies, artificial intelligence and new delivery systems have decidedly increased the threat of nuclear weapons. In that regard, hundreds of billions of dollars are being spent to replace and upgrade nuclear arsenals. The nuclear-weapon States are engaged to varying degrees in a qualitative arms race, while the tensions among them are mounting.

They have put their commitments aside and no longer intend to honour them. For instance, this year's budget request of the United States maintains or even increases the budget for every nuclear-weapons programme that was proposed under the Trump Administration.

Similarly, the United Kingdom's recent review of its nuclear-weapons policy included increasing the ceiling of its nuclear-weapons stockpile by up to 44 per cent, as well as lowering the threshold for the possible use of such weapons and reducing transparency about them. Those facts, together with the demise of key nuclear-arms-control agreements, the erosion of the international arms-control architecture and, more importantly, the lack of concrete action in implementing the legally binding obligations of the nuclear-weapon States on nuclear disarmament and the lack of any such prospect in the future, severely endanger international peace and security.

All in all, the international community needs the nuclear-weapon States to demonstrate the political will to develop an updated disarmament action plan within a specific time frame. Such a plan should contain, as a first step, halting the research, development, testing and production of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. The nuclear-weapon States should also declare that they will not design, develop or produce new nuclear weapons or modify or modernize their existing warheads by adding military capabilities.

In that regard, it is imperative that those States take steps to eliminate any role for nuclear weapons in their military and security concepts, doctrines and policies. Such accomplishments ought to be followed by denouncing and prohibiting any use of nuclear weapons and must be complemented by the destruction of their nuclear arsenals. The declaration that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought must be followed by action. All of the imperatives I have just mentioned can and should be accomplished through the adoption of a comprehensive convention, the negotiations on which should commence as early as possible in the Conference on Disarmament (CD).

Regarding the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, Iran — the first country to have put forward such an idea at the United Nations — underlines that the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

(NPT), as well as other relevant decisions on the subject, remain valid and should be implemented until the objective of establishing such a zone is achieved. In that vein, the implementation of decision 73/546 is without prejudice to the validity of the resolution I just mentioned or to any decisions made therein and must not be construed as a replacement.

However, the Israeli regime is a major obstacle to that noble goal. It possesses all types of WMD and threatens to use them against countries in the region. Furthermore, that regime has committed various terrorist attacks against nuclear scientists and initiated various sabotage attacks against nuclear facilities. It must therefore be forced to join all related instruments, including the NPT, without any precondition. Moreover, as a non-nuclear party, it must place all its nuclear facilities and activities under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Iran is of the view that outer space and other celestial bodies are the common heritage of humankind and must be used for exclusively peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all countries. The prevention of an arms race in outer space would avert a severe threat to international peace and security. Further measures, including a legally binding instrument with appropriate and effective verification provisions, should therefore be developed in a timely manner in the CD.

Given the obvious realities we face, we are deeply concerned about the activities of the United States and other actors regarding the increasing threat of their weaponizing outer space, including the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic-missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space, which have, *inter alia*, contributed to the further weakening of an international climate conducive to promoting disarmament and strengthening international security.

On another note, some delegations, in particular the delegation of Saudi Arabia, raised unwarranted concerns and allegations about Iran's peaceful nuclear programme and defensive missile programme. Furthermore, it is unfortunate to note that, in order to justify its illogical and unprincipled positions, which run counter to its international obligations, the delegation of the United Kingdom irresponsibly referred to the so-called threat of Iran, despite the peaceful nature

of Iran's nuclear activities having been confirmed on numerous occasions by the IAEA. We should not be distracted from the real threats, that is, the Israeli nuclear-weapons programme at the regional level and the very existence of WMD at the global level.

I hope that the resumption of the substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission will lead us to put an end to all of those threats. Iran is ready to play its role in that regard.

Mr. Bandiya (Nigeria): The delegation of Nigeria congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) at its current substantive session. We also congratulate the Vice Chairs and the Chairs of the Working Groups on their elections. We assure you and them of our full support and cooperation. We have no doubt that our work will benefit from your and their experience and commitment.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.377) and wishes to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Nigeria underscores the importance of the UNDC as the sole specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. While recognizing its usefulness and potential as the competent forum for addressing issues on comprehensive nuclear disarmament, we wish to state that the Commission needs to streamline and improve its working methods in order to enable it to deliver on its mandate. It needs to prioritize nuclear disarmament as a topmost priority and confront the challenges of non-proliferation.

My delegation welcomes the conclusion of work and the adoption by consensus of the recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons during the 2017 session of the UNDC, and expresses regret that consensus was not reached on the agenda item entitled "nuclear disarmament" for several years. In that context, my delegation hopes to see an outcome that provides for far-reaching and unambiguous recommendations in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation during this session.

My delegation reiterates its concern about the current difficult and complex situation in the field of disarmament and international security. Sadly, little has

changed to date that instils confidence and reduces the enormous challenges to global peace and security. In that regard, Nigeria calls for renewed efforts to resolve the current impasse in achieving nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in all their aspects. My delegation expresses its concern at the increasing global military expenditure, which could otherwise be spent on pressing development needs.

Nigeria further reaffirms its position on nuclear disarmament, which remains the agreed highest priority for the United Nations in the area of disarmament, in accordance with the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2). Nigeria is deeply concerned about the non-compliance of the nuclear-weapon States and the threats posed to the non-proliferation regime and the international security architecture.

My delegation wishes to seize this opportunity to again highlight the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (A/51/218, annex), which affirms that the threat or use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law.

My delegation stresses that the universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is dependent on strict compliance with its three pillars, namely, disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As we prepare for the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, my delegation hopes that the efforts of all Member States will be geared towards strengthening the Treaty by genuinely reinforcing its three pillars.

Nuclear weapons represent a grave existential threat to humankind. Nigeria therefore underscores the importance of resolution 70/34 as an integral part of the multilateral disarmament effort. My delegation is mindful of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that could result from the deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons. To that end, my delegation calls on all States, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to take into consideration the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of such weapons for human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among others, as well as the need for the nuclear-weapon States to take the necessary measures aimed at dismantling and renouncing such weapons. It is in that context that Nigeria strongly supports all efforts aimed

at the total elimination and delegitimization of nuclear weapons as the utmost prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security.

The delegation of Nigeria underscores the importance of continued respect for the inalienable right to the peaceful uses of outer space and emphasizes the importance of preventing the weaponization of outer space in order to preserve peace and security for the benefit of humankind. In that regard, Nigeria remains committed to using its space science capabilities for developmental purposes. To that end, we have embarked on several developmental projects, including the creation of a desertification sensitivity index, population dissymmetric analysis and carbon emission assessments. Nigeria firmly believes that space technology has the immense potential to benefit both developed and developing countries. Therefore, there is a need to promote equal, non-discriminatory access to outer space, irrespective of the levels of social, economic or scientific development.

My delegation reaffirms the importance of the prevention of an arms race in outer space through a legally binding instrument that complements the international legal framework, in a manner that allows for the equal exploration of outer space based on the principles of the non-appropriation and peaceful uses of outer space, in conformity with the five United Nations treaties governing space activities.

The delegation of Nigeria strongly supports the central and leading role of the United Nations in promoting and developing rules and principles for the responsible use of information and communications technologies by States through a collaborative, inclusive and equitable process. My delegation considers it imperative to maintain trust and security in the digital environment.

Finally, as we begin the current substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, my delegation remains hopeful that Member States will demonstrate flexibility as our deliberations get under way in the coming days.

Mr. Syrymbet (Kazakhstan): I am honoured to deliver this joint statement on behalf of Kazakhstan and Kiribati to highlight the initiative we launched last year. But before I do so, it is my pleasure to extend warm congratulations from both of our countries to the members of the Bureau at the start of this new cycle of

work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC).

The world is currently facing the existential dangers of nuclear weapons like never before, owing to the relentless efforts of the nuclear-weapon States to continually modernize their nuclear arsenals. The risk of an accidental nuclear confrontation is very possible, as mentioned by our colleague from Pakistan, given that almost all nuclear forces are currently on high alert. We are also concerned about the continuing erosion of trust amongst the great Powers, which could jeopardize the long-standing international agreements on nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

However, what is of the greatest concern is the unfathomable damage that nuclear weapons could cause for innocent people and the environment. In that regard, Kazakhstan and Kiribati have been heavily impacted at both the human and environmental level by nuclear testing and the past build-up of nuclear weapons. We therefore attach great importance to the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and its two Working Groups. We hope that meaningful progress will be achieved so as to alleviate international tensions and thereby avert the use of those lethal weapons.

Since the previous session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, major developments have been made in the area of nuclear disarmament. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force in January 2021, and its first meeting of States parties is scheduled to take place in Vienna, Austria, in June. That historic Treaty contains a robust set of prohibitions and strong provisions to help the victims of nuclear weapons and to remediate contaminated environments.

Having witnessed the killing of our people and the destruction of our land, we would like to suggest that the Commission devote particular attention to its positive obligations, as contained in articles 6 and 7 of the TPNW, which are central to the humanitarian goals of the Treaty and ensure that it addresses the harm caused by the past use and testing of nuclear weapons and prevents such harm in the future.

It is our strong conviction that the TPNW complements the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Moreover, the long-delayed Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will take place in New York this year, during which States parties should reaffirm the centrality of the Treaty, including

the 2010 NPT Action Plan, the 13 practical steps on nuclear disarmament and, most significantly, article VI of the Treaty.

As we move forward with the substantive work of the UNDC, we call on States to engage in deliberations by focusing on the need to support a rules-based international non-proliferation regime and support mutually reinforcing international treaties. We further recommend that States emphasize the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, which is indeed a critical issue given the current international situation.

We trust that members of the international community will be able to bridge their differences and support international measures to help establish a just and peaceful world and thereby safeguard the lives of the generations to come.

Mr. Rodríguez Cuadros (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government of Peru, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election to steer the work of the Disarmament Commission, as well as the representatives of Jamaica and Hungary on their elections as Chairs of the Working Groups on nuclear weapons and outer space, respectively. We are confident that under your able leadership, Sir, we will be able to make progress in our work. You can count on the full support of the Peruvian delegation.

The Disarmament Commission is meeting amid a dangerous and unstable international context that is seriously affecting international peace and security. The collective security system of the United Nations was built following the failure of that which established the League of Nations and as a consequence of the Second World War. The peace guaranteed by the Charter of the United Nations was built on the more than 30 million deaths caused by the First and Second World Wars, both of which began on European soil. History tells us that European security and the basic balance of the security perceptions of its States constitute a key pillar of international stability and the peace and security of all peoples.

Today Europe is once again putting world peace under severe strain. Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, the violation of its territorial integrity and the underlying crisis plaguing the European security system has put global peace on the brink of collapse. Despite the conflicts and unilateral armed interventions in contravention of international law and the Charter of the United Nations that have taken place since the end

of the Second World War, the collective security system established by the Charter in 1945 has succeeded in its basic preventions. Since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world has yet to face the horror of nuclear conflict, and localized conflicts have been averted among the major nuclear Powers. Today, however, we stand on the brink of such eventualities, which demonstrates the seriousness of the current international context in which the Disarmament Commission is meeting following three years of unsuccessful efforts, during which time it was impossible to reach an agreement on its convening.

The fact that the Commission has been able to meet in a substantive session after a three-year hiatus lends a particular sense of urgency to our work. It provides a glimmer of hope, given that all Member States have fundamentally expressed the political will to fulfil the ethical, legal, political and diplomatic imperative to work in favour of peace and disarmament, abandon war rhetoric and move towards mutual understanding, negotiation, peace and respect for international law and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

In that context, the Government of Peru expresses its deep regret over the war in Ukraine and its outrage at events such as the massacre in Bucha, which must be the subject of a fully independent investigation to clarify the facts and establish accountability. We also renew our call for a ceasefire and resolutely express our full support for the negotiations that are under way between the parties to find a negotiated solution in order to put an end to the conflict and safeguard the security interests of all parties. We hope that those negotiations will restore peace and the primacy of international law.

Now more than ever in the entire history of nuclear weapons it is essential to make every effort to advance towards the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons by assuming full responsibility and applying the utmost rigour, as required by the gravity of the current situation. The nuclear-arms-control process, however, has remained practically at a standstill for more than a decade. Certain scenarios remain significant in that context.

The renewal last year of the New START Treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation was a step in the right direction in preserving the bilateral architecture of the nuclear-arms-control process between those two nuclear super Powers. It

also serves to mitigate the instability that was created by the withdrawal of the United States from the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-range and Shorter-range Missiles. Against that backdrop of instability, prolonging the commitment to limit the number of strategic weapons held by the United States and the Russian Federation for a further five years, with verifiable limits for intercontinental ballistic missiles, was a positive decision that preserves the process of implementing bilateral limitations on strategic nuclear weapons.

At the multilateral level, the next Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which will finally take place in August, must reaffirm that although non-proliferation remains essential to collective nuclear security, it is not an end in itself but rather a critical means of achieving general and complete disarmament. In that regard, non-proliferation has two components, namely, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament.

The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which my country ratified in December last year, marks an important step forward. Explicitly and comprehensively banning nuclear weapons throughout the world is of clear significance. It is also important that, for the first time, the regulatory framework on nuclear weapons has broadened its scope to include international humanitarian law and the protection of human rights by establishing a mechanism of cooperation and assistance for the victims of nuclear attacks. We must work to ensure that such a focus on human rights and humanitarian law cuts across all nuclear-arms-control regimes. Regional agreements are also essential to continue to free territories and areas from the presence and threat of nuclear weapons, particularly in areas of high tension. In that context, Peru fully supports the initiative to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Mr. Syrymbet (Kazakhstan), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

In order to guarantee the peaceful use of outer space, Peru also supports and promotes the commencement of negotiations with a view to concluding and adopting a legally binding instrument, based on the principle of non-ownership, to prevent an arms race in outer

space and ensure its use peaceful for the benefit of all humankind.

All the initiatives I have referred to must reinforce our conviction about the true and primary objective of the Conference on Disarmament, which is to reach a binding, universal, verifiable and irreversible international agreement on general and complete nuclear disarmament. International peace and security and people's lives cannot and must not continue to be threatened by the existence and possible use of the world's 13,000 nuclear warheads, which are currently on high alert.

Mr. Espinosa Cañizares (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for and acknowledge the statement by Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu (see A/CN.10/PV.377), whose work I should also like to highlight as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs over the past five years, since assuming that role on 1 May 2017. I wish to extend my congratulations to South Africa on its election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission. I also wish to join other delegations in underscoring the historical and current role played by South Africa in disarmament efforts. I hope its leadership will be reflected in the outcome of this session of the Disarmament Commission. To that end, the Chair can count on the unwavering support of the Ecuadorian delegation.

There is no time to lose following a three-year hiatus in the work of the Disarmament Commission. Let us make no mistake — the beginning of the current session has also faced institutional challenges, as reflected in the difficulty of achieving the complete representation of the various regions in the Bureau and in the convening of yesterday's organizational meeting without a period of separation from the formal start of the session. Worse still, there was uncertainty among many delegations, including my own, as to whether this session would take place or not.

Nevertheless, what is truly worrisome and the greatest challenge confronting the international community is the most complex and fragile environment that the world has faced since the end of the Cold War — and even, I would say, since the Second World War. Nuclear weapons do not make this planet a safer world. Neither do they make any region or country a safer place. On the contrary, nuclear weapons continue to jeopardize the existence of humankind.

As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the predecessor of this body, that is, the Disarmament Commission established under the Security Council in January 1952, and having seen how it has evolved through various bodies until the creation of the Commission in its current form as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly in 1978, we should honour the efforts of those who came before us by fostering and facilitating the adoption of practical recommendations at the end of the coming three-week period.

The Commission must therefore be revitalized in the light of the progress that has been made outside of it, including the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 22 January 2021. Ecuador will participate in the first meeting of the States parties to the Treaty, which is scheduled to be held in Vienna in June. I would like to reiterate that the Treaty consistently complements the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, together with other instruments, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Ecuador once again expresses its total rejection of any contemplation, planning or conducting of nuclear tests and reiterates its support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, while urging the international community to join efforts to achieve the early entry into force of the Treaty.

Owing to the Earth's diameter at the equator, my country is located at the closest point on our planet to outer space. We therefore promote and defend its exclusively peaceful use and oppose its lawlessness and militarization. We also strongly oppose the placement of weapons or any military material outside the atmosphere. We support an international system based on norms and the sovereign equality of States. However, norms of voluntary behaviour are not enough — they merely complement and bolster international law. A conflict in space could only have devastating consequences for humankind, which is why we reaffirm our belief in the need for a legally binding instrument that preserves the peaceful nature of space as the common heritage of humankind.

I congratulate the representatives of Jamaica and Hungary on their election as Chairs of the Working Groups and reiterate my delegation's full support.

In conclusion, I would like to associate myself with the statement delivered by the representative of

Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.377).

Mr. Sharoni (Israel): As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor at this session, I would like to congratulate Mr. Xolisa Mabhongo on assuming the chairmanship of the Commission and assure him of my delegation's support in the implementation of his duties. I would also like to congratulate the Chairs of the Working Groups, the representatives of Jamaica and Hungary, and wish them success and assure them of my delegation's support.

The importance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) in the context of the disarmament machinery was outlined at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978, where it was stipulated that the function of the UNDC shall be to, *inter alia*, consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament and consider the elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament. In order to fulfil its mandate, it is clear that the UNDC must look at issues in a comprehensive manner and in the relevant context. Its recommendations should be based on the reality on the ground and strike the necessary balance between what we hope to achieve and what is plausible, taking into consideration the prevailing regional and global circumstances.

In that respect, Israel believes that we should be focusing on compliance, implementation and verification. Without those three very important basic pillars of arms control and disarmament, what we have built over the years will soon collapse. If we seek to develop additional tools without the full implementation of, and compliance with, the existing ones, we will fall short of addressing the real current and future problems. In that context, there should be no room for compromise with the culture of non-compliance — a culture that unfortunately exists in the Middle East.

Israel therefore believes that it is of the utmost importance — especially in these times of tension in which decades-long norms are being eradicated — to preserve what we have achieved to date in the various arms-control and disarmament forums. At the same time, arms control and disarmament processes that fail to give due regard to the security context may result in arrangements and agreements being reached that hinder rather than reinforce global and regional stability.

Another very important element at this turbulent time is the need to clearly see the reality for what it is. If compliance is not verified today when information is at hand, a much more complicated reality will have to be faced tomorrow. If a threat is not recognized for what it is, it will be difficult to strike the necessary balance between the integrity of arms control and the challenges at hand — challenges such as the risk of Iran's nuclear, chemical and missile programmes, or that of Iran's proliferation of weapons in the Middle East region, or that of Iran's proliferation of missiles and their related technologies to non-State actors. Following Syria's use of chemical weapons, the erosion of the norm concerning the total prohibition of the use of weapons of mass destruction is another challenge and a cause of great concern that must be addressed.

Israel supports the vision of a Middle East free of wars, conflicts and weapons of mass destruction. That is a vision to which all of the region's inhabitants should aspire — a vision based on the hope for peace, mutual recognition by all States, reconciliation and the cessation of all acts of terrorism, aggression and hostility. Though that is what Israel hopes for, unfortunately the reality in the Middle East is much different. The use of chemical weapons in the Middle East has become routine throughout the years. Similarly, the proliferation of conventional weapons, missiles and their related technologies and know-how by States in the region to non-State actors, better known as terrorist organizations, has become common practice. Such violations of arms-control and disarmament instruments serve as another clear demonstration of the proliferation challenges that exist in the Middle East.

One-sided approaches to arms control in the Middle East region contradict the principles that were defined with a view to paving the way towards a better future. The one-sided initiative of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction is a great example of a measure that contradicts the UNDC's own guidelines regarding the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, as set out during the fifty-fourth session of this forum in 1999 (A/54/42).

In that regard, some countries and actors in the region claim that a comprehensive security architecture can be established in the Middle East without direct engagement with Israel, without recognizing Israel's right to exist within safe and secure borders, without reducing regional tension and building the necessary

trust and confidence among all regional States and with disregard for the norms and principles that were agreed upon in the arms-control forums. That position is untenable.

The UNDC was entrusted with the important mandate to reflect on and debate both the current and future challenges in order to preserve global arms control. At the same time, the preservation of the arms-control mechanisms that address the existing challenges must incorporate implementation, compliance and verification. We believe that adopting a comprehensive approach in our discussions in the coming weeks, taking into account all of those elements, can serve as the best vehicle to address the threats and challenges we face.

Israel hopes for successful deliberations during this year's plenary session of the UNDC.

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

Mr. Gonzato (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

At the outset, and since this is the first time I am speaking on behalf of the EU at this session, let me start by congratulating Mr. Xolisa Mabhongo on assuming the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its current session. I assure him of our full support. I would also like to extend our warm congratulations to Mr. Kurt Davis of Jamaica on his election as Chair of Working Group I and Mrs. Szilvia Balázs on her election as Chair of Working Group II. We are also grateful for the continuing support of the Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs in this important area.

Today's plenary meeting is taking place in the context of one of the darkest hours for Europe since the Second World War. The European Union condemns in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. Through its illegal military actions and threats, Russia is grossly violating international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and undermining European and global security and stability. Russia bears the full responsibility for that act of aggression and all the destruction and loss of life it causes. It will be held accountable for its actions. The

EU remains strongly committed to the fight against impunity for those crimes.

Ukraine acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear-weapon State in 1994, renouncing its Soviet-era nuclear weapons and receiving security guarantees in return. In the Budapest Memorandum, Russia explicitly committed to respecting the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine and to refraining from the threat or use of force against the country. Through its military invasion of Ukraine, Russia continues to blatantly violate the Budapest Memorandum to the detriment of the NPT regime. The Russian Federation must guarantee unequivocal security assurances as part of the binding and agreed security arrangements. The loss of Russia's credibility on its security assurances seriously undermines the NPT regime and the entire disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

The European Union demands that Russia immediately cease its military actions, unconditionally withdraw all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders. The EU resolutely supports Ukraine's inherent right of self-defence and the Ukrainian armed forces' efforts to defend the country's territorial integrity and population, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Russia must at all times respect its obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian law.

The EU strongly condemns the Russian Federation's decision to increase the readiness of its nuclear forces and the threats by President Putin of using nuclear force in this war. Such threats are unacceptable, provocative, dangerous and escalatory. At the beginning of this year, in the context of a joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States, the Russian Federation reaffirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. In the interest of all humankind, the Russian Federation must heed its commitments and immediately cease that nuclear brinkmanship and rhetoric.

The EU firmly believes that the use of force and coercion to change borders has no place in the twenty-first century. Tensions and conflict should be resolved exclusively through dialogue and diplomacy.

The EU will continue to cooperate closely with its neighbours and reiterates its unwavering support for, and commitment to, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. We will continue to pursue strong coordination with partners and allies within the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO and the Group of Seven. The integrity of the rules-based international system is key to our collective security. That can be achieved only through effective multilateralism and rules-based global governance. The EU will continue to do its utmost to protect those principles and values.

The current complex security environment, which is marked by increasing tensions and ongoing proliferation crises, underscores the need to preserve and further advance general arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes. We welcome and encourage further initiatives and processes at the international and regional levels in order to restore dialogue and trust and promote transparency and confidence-building measures.

The EU reaffirms its unequivocal support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime — the essential foundation of the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. At the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty, which will take place in August, the EU will continue to promote a positive and substantive outcome. The NPT has an enduring value, and its full implementation is needed now more than ever.

Promoting universal adherence to, and the entry into force of, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a top priority for the EU. We urge all States that have not yet done so, in particular those listed in annex 2 of the Treaty, to sign and ratify it without any preconditions or further delay.

The EU and its member States continue to strongly promote the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment and the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis. We recognize outer space as a global commons to be used for the benefit of all. Strengthening the safety, security, sustainability and peaceful nature of outer-space activities is a key priority in the common interest of present and future generations.

We remain convinced that transparency and confidence-building measures and norms of responsible behaviour can make an important contribution to the security, safety and sustainability of activities in outer space. We remain strongly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space and to enhancing space security. We remain concerned about the continuing development and testing of anti-satellite weapons and urge all States Members of the United Nations to refrain from such harmful activities. In that regard, we strongly condemn the Russian Federation's recent conduct of a kinetic anti-satellite weapon test against its own satellite, *Kosmos-1408*, which is a clear act of irresponsible behaviour in outer space.

We look forward to contributing to the debate of Working Group II by thoroughly elaborating on the elements I have mentioned and others.

Mr. Flores (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation joins others in congratulating Mr. Xolisa Mabhongo on his election to steer the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as well as the delegations of Hungary and Jamaica on their election as Chairs of the two Working Groups. Honduras takes this opportunity to express its full support for the work of the Commission so as to ensure the best possible conditions for dialogue and results in our deliberations. In that regard, we reaffirm our commitment to the Organization's efforts to continue working for general and complete disarmament, non-proliferation and the implementation of international agreements on disarmament and arms control in order to maintain peace and collective security for the good of all humankind.

We echo the concerns raised by others about the increase in global military expenditure. We believe that such expenditure could be better used for the common well-being of those in areas of urgent social need and to meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As a founding State of the United Nations, Honduras embraced the provisions of Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, which explicitly states that we must maintain international peace and security. To that end, we must undertake collective and effective measures that are grounded in the principles of justice and international law. Historically, through its foreign policy, my country has been unwavering in reaffirming its commitment to disarmament by acceding to international instruments emanating from the United

Nations, as well as hemispheric and regional bodies, on matters relating to disarmament, confidence-building measures and arms control.

Honduras ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 22 January 2021, thereby becoming the fiftieth State to deposit its ratification instrument with this universal Organization — a historic moment that brought such an important international instrument into force. We are now eagerly awaiting the first meeting of its States parties for the benefit of the peace and security of all humankind and the sustainability of the planet.

The risk posed by the possible use or threat of the use of nuclear weapons irrefutably undermines the work and objectives of this multilateral forum. The only way to eradicate the risk posed by nuclear weapons is to completely eliminate them. Honduras condemns nuclear-weapon tests and calls for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction through multilateral negotiation and based on the principles of verification, irreversibility and transparency. We also reaffirm the importance of humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons and in advancing the goal of nuclear disarmament. We reaffirm now more than ever the urgent need for all States to comply with the principles of international law at all times.

Honduras is proud to be a State party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established Latin America and the Caribbean as the first densely populated zone free of nuclear weapons. In that regard, we support initiatives aimed at creating other zones free of such weapons. As a contribution to international peace and security, my country reiterates its call for all countries of the world to commit to using nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes and through responsible scientific cooperation.

Honduras supports the use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes and advocates the strengthening of international norms applicable to States in the field of information and communications technologies in the context of international security. My country also promotes actions and strategies to strengthen cybersecurity and the use of a safe, stable, accessible and peaceful outer space that is regulated by a universal legal instrument. Honduras underscores here the need for genuine, moral and transparent political will in support of the multilateral disarmament

mechanisms, in particular the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that Honduras believes it essential that we exchange experiences, continuously build capacities and ensure the participation of women in confronting the issues we face.

Ms. Abbar (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation would like to extend its sincere congratulations to Mr. Xolisa Mabhongo on his election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission at its second substantive session and to assure him of our full support and cooperation throughout his mandate. My delegation also congratulates the representatives of Jamaica and Hungary on their election as Chairs of the Working Groups.

My country aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the representative of Egypt, on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/CN.10/PV.377), and would like to make the following observations in its national capacity.

The Kingdom of Morocco welcomes the resumption of the Disarmament Commission's important work after several years of hiatus. The Disarmament Commission, the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament have critical and indispensable roles to play, especially at a time of heightened tension and risk such as the present. The issue of disarmament and non-proliferation remains a fundamental and perennial objective of the United Nations and its States Members. In that context, Morocco welcomes that the issue consistently remains on the Commission's agenda.

Morocco remains convinced that nuclear weapons are neither a guarantee of security nor an assurance of stability at the regional and international levels. We have therefore made a strategic choice to commit to disarmament and non-proliferation, which illustrates our commitment to international peace and security and to the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes. In addition to the danger posed by their mere existence, the use of such weapons has the potential not only to cause catastrophic humanitarian and ecological consequences, but also to lead to a race for more modern and sophisticated weapons. Although some action has been taken, the goal of nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons has yet to be achieved.

Nevertheless, those dangers could be averted if the international community were to demonstrate genuine political will and mobilize to take concrete steps towards their elimination. Morocco therefore would like to reiterate its unwavering commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, given that it has ensured our collective security for more than 50 years. We also reiterate the importance that the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty take place, following several postponements, and the need for the international community to recommit to non-proliferation and disarmament issues.

Morocco also recalls the importance of working towards the universalization of the Treaty and achieving its objectives, while emphasizing that a balance between its three pillars can be preserved only through the balanced and universal application of all its provisions. Morocco also reiterates its commitment to the inalienable right of States parties to the NPT to use nuclear energy for peaceful and development purposes, in particular through international cooperation under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The crucial role played by zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction as a means of consolidating regional and international peace and security has never waned — the opposite is true — particularly in the Middle East. In that regard, the Kingdom of Morocco welcomed the adoption of decision 73/546 and the successful convening of the first and second sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction under the active and able presidency of Jordan and Kuwait, respectively. Those sessions culminated in the adoption of important documents for the continuation of that key process. Moreover, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the importance of which is set out in the very preamble to the NPT, has yet to enter into force despite the fact that more than 25 years have passed since its adoption by the General Assembly. As a stakeholder committed to regional and international peace and security, Morocco continues to make efforts to promote the entry into force and universality of the CTBT with the aim of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

Finally, Morocco welcomes the establishment by the Conference on Disarmament of five subsidiary bodies to conduct substantive discussions and broaden areas of convergence. My country hopes that will pave the way for the commencement of urgent negotiations on essential issues relating to nuclear disarmament, banning the production and stockpiling of fissile material and the protection of outer space. With regard to Working Group II, from the very outset Morocco ratified the five treaties in that area and joined the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in 1961. My country believes that it is important to work towards the negotiation of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

My delegation also welcomes the creation of a new Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, whose discussions will complement those relating to the prevention of arms races in outer space. Morocco attaches great importance to international cooperation and capacity-building in outer space. My country remains committed to the principle of the universalization and improvement of the mechanisms provided for in United Nations treaties and conventions aimed at guaranteeing the peaceful use of outer space, as well as the principle of the non-appropriation of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies.

The full version of my statement will be uploaded to the e-Statements portal.

Mr. Jiménez (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Nicaraguan delegation is pleased to congratulate Mr. Xolisa Mabhongo on his election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission and wishes him every success in his work. We also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the Working Groups on their elections.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.377).

Our delegation is pleased to resume the work and efforts undertaken in the Disarmament Commission, which regrettably has not been convened since 2018, but which should preserve its relevance by deliberating in depth on specific disarmament issues with the aim of providing concrete recommendations to the General Assembly. We hope to make progress and

thereby demonstrate the political will to make further commitments during this session, specifically on the issues of nuclear disarmament and outer space.

Nicaragua expresses to the international community the importance of producing recommendations to advance towards general and complete disarmament, for which the utmost priority is still the elimination of nuclear weapons, the use of which runs counter to the fundamental principles of general international law and international humanitarian law. With that in mind, we ratified the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Our delegation will actively participate in the first meeting of States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons — two processes that can contribute to a world free of nuclear weapons.

We support the universalization of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which establishes the norm of international law that prohibits — for the first time ever — the existence, use and threat of the use of nuclear weapons, including nuclear tests. We should continue to promote initiatives such as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, which is marked each year on 26 September, given that such initiatives help raise awareness about the threat posed by nuclear weapons to humankind.

With regard to nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as a State party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Nicaragua supports the adoption, evaluation and review of resolutions and declarations on such issues with a view to limiting the arms race and seeking steps towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons under a system of transparent and effective international control. We support the continuation of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Nicaragua endorses the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/68/189). We believe that outer space is a heritage of humankind and that its use should therefore be for peaceful and civilian purposes, the benefit of which should bring about cooperation among all nations, not only developed countries. Our country is therefore committed to, and agrees with, the need to

develop and implement international transparency and confidence-building measures for the peaceful use of outer space.

We support the negotiation of a treaty prohibiting an arms race in outer space, as proposed by China and Russia in the Conference on Disarmament. Despite being a developing country, Nicaragua reiterates its full support for the legitimate right of all States to have equal access to outer space without any discrimination. We therefore call for support in the area of scientific and technological cooperation from countries that have such access.

We have long highlighted the stagnation in the disarmament machinery, but we have not yet been able to resolve the real problem, which is the lack of political will on the part of some States to achieve genuine progress, especially in the area of nuclear disarmament. The Disarmament Commission provides a good opportunity to make concrete recommendations in that regard.

The Acting Chair: There are four speakers remaining on the list of speakers and several requests to take the floor in exercise of the right of reply. We will hear from two more speakers at this meeting. Then, at 3 p.m., we will hear from the remaining speakers and those delegations wishing to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

The first informal meeting of Working Group II will be held in this Conference Room immediately after we have heard from delegations speaking in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Nyanid (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is grateful to the Chair for the opportunity to contribute to the debate on disarmament issues, which is the main focus of our work, and congratulates him on his election as Chair of the Commission at this session.

My delegation is concerned about the current state of international peace and security, which has been weakened by the race to acquire new types of weapons, such as lethal autonomous weapons systems, cyberweapons and other weapons of mass destruction. That difficult situation, which is amplified by geopolitical tension, is at the root of the current turmoil that has created a more complex international security environment and starkly highlights the new challenges that call on us to question the international community's approach to disarmament. In that context, it is important

to bear in mind that war and the balance of power between States are no longer instruments that serve as a guarantee of lasting security on the international scene. Peace cannot be decreed by treaties, but instead largely depends on establishing an international community that is capable of acting collectively. Given the fragility and ever-changing landscape of the international community, my delegation believes that the maintenance of international peace and security requires all States to develop a new approach that is accepted and shared by all. We need to rethink disarmament by putting the human person at the centre of our concerns.

My delegation is concerned about new signs of an arms race in which countries are continuing to build up their military capabilities, thereby undermining global strategic stability. My delegation believes that only political will bolstered by action can restore trust among States and reduce tensions. It goes without saying that a secure world should be the priority of all foreign policy in order to constantly seek common ground despite the difficulties we face.

My delegation commends the Disarmament Commission as a forum for multilateral diplomacy on disarmament that deals with all aspects of the issue and creates effective frameworks for disarmament and non-proliferation. We call on it to play an increasingly important role by demonstrating flexibility and reinventing itself in order to respond to new challenges, given that it is the only subsidiary body of the General Assembly with universal membership in which consensus remains the underlying principle. It therefore has clear authority and responsibility within the United Nations disarmament mechanism.

My delegation supports disarmament in all its aspects but takes a particular interest in so-called conventional weapons, which continue to represent a major security challenge for all regions around the world. A thousand people die every day from the use of firearms, and three times that number suffer serious injuries. If the deaths, injuries and disabilities caused by those weapons were classified in the disease category, we might well be talking about a pandemic. Yet the media and public opinion often suggest that armed violence is simply an inevitable consequence of human cruelty and deprivation, rather than an issue stemming from the availability of such weapons.

Cameroon, which, like other countries, has been a victim of those weapons, calls for a comprehensive

approach that reflects the various facets of the problem. Massacres, acts perpetrated by armed gangs and systematic sexual violence all have a common denominator, specifically, the availability of firearms. My delegation therefore calls for reducing existing stockpiles and the supply of new weapons, putting an end to trafficking between licit and illicit markets and reducing the incentive to acquire firearms.

My delegation further calls on the international community as a whole to commit to combating the trade in such weapons and their ammunition and to strongly support the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument. We also call for trust to be restored. In that regard, we believe it important that States respect each other and that the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States be scrupulously respected. Indeed, there is an aggressive sociopolitical engineering associated with interfering in the internal affairs of States and imposing ready-made schemes of social and political development, which generates international tension and public upheaval.

My delegation regrets that arms expenditure deprives States of resources that are essential for sustainable development. We believe that disarmament should be directly linked to the maintenance of international peace and security and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is somewhat perplexing to try to achieve peace while allowing areas of destitution and despair to thrive, which resonates as much as the blast from a weapon of mass destruction. The difference is that a button needs to be pressed to detonate a weapon of mass destruction, whereas the social weapon emanating from the very worst of humankind matures through frustration, exclusion and discrimination and is triggered without any warning once the tolerance threshold is reached. The international community should therefore consider that situation a security risk and a challenge to be addressed in disarmament doctrines.

Given our particular interest in advancing disarmament, my delegation is concerned about the stagnation in the implementation of commitments made and underscores the importance of respecting disarmament agreements. We believe that increasing the number of international legally binding instruments in areas as sensitive as those affecting States' security

is ineffective if they are not accompanied by the political will of States to implement them. To date, the blossoming of increasingly well-written and well-structured texts addressing very specific areas has not made the world any safer. On the contrary, the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture is being undermined by the proliferation of numerous and increasingly sophisticated weapons. The world is already a dangerous place, and we should take reassuring steps to avoid it becoming scarier still by moving too far into the unknown. That means that, beyond mere words, a return to calm requires concrete and measurable steps. Fewer promises and greater action should be everyone's new rallying call.

In conclusion, my delegation supports the indivisibility of security and believes it to be an equal right of all States. We therefore call on the Commission to respond to the question that encapsulates the challenges that will shape tomorrow's security issues, namely, how can we maintain the stability of the international system and at the same time focus on a genuine path towards universal security and common development? That will require building a new world in a spirit of solidarity, openness and cooperation in which the security of one State does not compromise that of others — a single vision of security that will put an end once and for all to the main symptoms and expression of current crises.

My delegation would like to recall that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their related materials and technologies, as well as the risk of nuclear terrorism, require constant coordination and cooperation at the regional and international levels. In that regard, we believe that strict compliance with existing international obligations under international conventions, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction; and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), should be a priority of the international community. Disregarding those obligations or burying our heads in the sand would be highly damaging and would have immediate consequences. As a wise man in my country very aptly put it, "when you know you are in danger, you are no longer in danger. But when you do

not know you are in danger, that is precisely when you are very much in danger”.

Ms. Quintero Correa (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate Ambassador Xolisa Mabhongo on his election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission. I also extend my congratulations to the representative of Kazakhstan on his election as Vice-Chair, as well as to the representatives of Jamaica and Hungary on their election as Chairs of Working Groups I and II, respectively.

We also thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her valuable introductory remarks (see A/CN.10/PV.377) and the Secretariat for organizing our work.

The Commission can count on my delegation's support for the success of this session. I express my delegation's readiness to participate constructively in our deliberations.

We welcome the convening of this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission — a fundamental deliberative body of the disarmament machinery — following a four-year hiatus. We believe that despite the difficulties faced in convening this session, the Commission can follow the example of the previous cycle and culminate with important recommendations on the issues before us, especially given their importance and the critical situation we are currently facing. Now more than ever there is a need to rebuild trust and engage in action-oriented dialogue in order to meet the needs and expectations of our societies, which expect the international institutions we have created to uphold the promise of maintaining international peace and security, promoting respect for dignity and human rights and ensuring the economic and social development of all peoples.

I will now turn to the specific items on the Commission's agenda and outline our position on them. Disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are principles of Colombia's foreign policy and mandates enshrined in our Constitution. My country is firmly committed to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Given the catastrophic, painful and protracted humanitarian and environmental consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, their total elimination is essential as the only absolute guarantee against their use or the threat of their use.

Recent events reiterate the need to move forward with urgent and effective measures for the complete elimination of such weapons in a verifiable, irreversible and transparent manner, in accordance with the obligations provided for in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the commitments to implementing it, as agreed upon at previous Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty. We also need to adopt measures to reduce the role and importance of nuclear weapons in military doctrines and security policies. Renewed dialogue driven by political will is required on that topic. Transparency with regard to doctrines, arsenals and the new risks posed by emerging technologies must also form part of that dialogue.

Against the current backdrop, developing risk reduction measures is of particular interest. To that end, it is important to adopt actions aimed at restoring and strengthening trust to help alleviate tensions. It is important to bear in mind that risk reduction and other measures are not a substitute for nuclear disarmament but rather steps towards achieving it. With regard to non-proliferation, we must continue to bolster the nuclear safeguards and verification system and promote its universalization. Establishing new nuclear-weapon-free zones and consolidating existing ones are important steps to counteract the risk of proliferation and contribute to disarmament. We hope the Commission can make progress in producing useful recommendations to achieve the objective of disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Space technology has contributed to transforming humankind's way of life owing to its applications in managing information and communications technologies, navigation and research and in a growing and sustained number of domains, including socioeconomic development and security. As space technology advances, so do security concerns. In that regard, while it is necessary to ensure that all States can access the benefits of space technology, we also need an updated international regulatory framework. It is important to work towards adopting voluntary measures, such as guidelines on best practices, transparency and confidence-building measures and norms of safe and responsible behaviour.

Colombia reiterates its commitment to the use and exploration of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes, underscores the need to adopt measures to

guarantee the long-term sustainability of outer-space activities and shares the concern about the possibility of an arms race. We should focus our efforts to avoid such a scenario and preserve the space environment for future generations.

We also share the concern about space debris, particularly those that use nuclear power sources. We therefore believe it is important to develop legally binding instruments that provide clarity on the responsibility of countries with regard to collisions of spacecraft, explosions, implosions, disasters involving those with nuclear power sources and their re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere. That work should be coordinated and integrated into existing agreements,

such as the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space. We believe that the Conference on Disarmament and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space should work together, as the multilateral forums in which potential challenges to the security and sustainability of outer space should be addressed, with the objective of increasing transparency and fostering trust by promoting international dialogue and the exchange of information among States.

We are grateful for the contributions and insightful remarks made by delegations who have spoken before us, and we hope that the goal of agreeing on action-oriented recommendations will guide our deliberations.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.