

Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand five hundred and eighty-fifth plenary meeting

Held via videoconference, on Tuesday, 27 July 2021, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Ms. Leslie E. Norton (Canada)



The President: I call to order the 1585th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to begin by giving a hearty welcome to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, who has joined us on the podium today. It is also my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to two new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments to the Conference. I would like to welcome the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Nigeria, His Excellency Mr. Abiodun Richards Adejola, and the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ukraine, Her Excellency Ms. Yevheniia Filipenko. On behalf of my own Government and on behalf of the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to assure both of you of our full cooperation and support in your new assignments.

Distinguished colleagues, I would now like to turn to the open discussion on agenda item 7, transparency in armaments, and would like to begin by making some remarks on behalf of my own country, Canada.

Transparency greatly impacts our efforts on disarmament. Enhancing transparency on armaments can contribute to building an international atmosphere of trust and confidence, which in turn facilitates progress on achieving our disarmament goals. In relation to nuclear weapons, increasing transparency among the nuclear-weapon States – in terms of greater clarity on nuclear doctrines, arsenals and capabilities – can contribute to an atmosphere conducive to negotiations on reductions to arsenals.

As a member of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, Canada believes that enhanced transparency is important to facilitate the implementation of several of the stepping stones to disarmament. As a member of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, Canada also believes that increased transparency provides reassurance that States parties are committed to implementing their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. As such, the Initiative has encouraged robust national reporting under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which lays the groundwork for further progress on implementing the Treaty.

(spoke in French)

Establishing transparency and trust can also strengthen the existing international norms governing space. Agreed definitions of responsible and threatening behaviours could help the world evaluate the actions of actors in the space environment. Such measures are a pragmatic way of improving the exchange of information between States, reducing the risk of misinterpretation and increasing the level of trust between States regarding the peaceful use of outer space. As a State party to the Arms Trade Treaty, Canada is pleased to promote transparency. The Treaty provides much needed clarity in respect of the circulation of conventional weapons across international borders. We suggest that States fully adhere to the Treaty and the guidelines and continue to work on transparency and confidence-building measures.

(spoke in English)

Before I open the floor to any other delegation that wishes to speak on this agenda item, I have received a special request from the representative of the Russian Federation who wishes to make a protocol statement. Sir, you have the floor.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: Distinguished colleagues, I have asked for the floor right at the start of the meeting in order to make a short statement which is unrelated to the topic of our discussion today. However, it certainly concerns the joint efforts which I am convinced that, as participants of the Conference on Disarmament, we must make.

On behalf of the Russian delegation, I would like to express our deepest sympathy to all the delegations of countries which in the past two months have been the victims of yet another natural cataclysm. The flooding due to torrential rain has caused not only serious damage but the loss of human life. The elements affected more than ten countries in Europe, Russia and China. We are fully aware of all the difficulties encountered by the inhabitants of

those countries that have suffered from the elements, because some regions of Russian were in a similar situation.

Nature is reminding us how fragile our world is and how weak we are when faced with natural disasters. The world has not yet managed to overcome the corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and we are already facing new challenges that once again require the mobilization of human and material resources in order to eliminate their consequences.

The struggle against natural calamities and the adoption of all the requisite measures to return to normality are the priority tasks for the States which have suffered from the deluge. The ideal conditions for resolving such pressing tasks would be an atmosphere of mutual understanding, cooperation and real rather than sham security.

Here in Geneva, through our joint efforts, we can and must make our contribution to the creation of such an atmosphere. Once again, I would like to express my sympathy to the citizens of countries that have suffered from sudden natural disasters in recent months.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his protocol statement. Our thoughts are certainly with those affected by the terrible flooding. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Ogasawara (Japan): Madam President, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you for setting the thematic debate on transparency in armaments, as transparency is of fundamental importance in arms control and disarmament. I would like also to extend a heartfelt welcome to our new colleagues, the ambassadors of Nigeria and Ukraine. And also, as the representative of one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, I would like to join my voice to that of the distinguished representative of Russia in expressing condolences and sympathy to those who have recently suffered from natural disasters.

Previous Non-Proliferation Treaty review conferences have acknowledged the principle of transparency as one of the three principles of nuclear disarmament. It is the most basic principle, as it underpins the other two principles, namely, irreversibility and verifiability. Without transparency, nuclear disarmament cannot be verified; nor would States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty have sufficient confidence that nuclear disarmament measures have been implemented in an irreversible manner. As the President has already mentioned in her initial remarks, the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative has made a meaningful contribution in terms of transparency.

Since the submission of working paper NPT/CONF.2015/PC.I/WP.12, which presents the draft of a standard nuclear disarmament reporting form to the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in 2012, the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, of which Japan is a member, has repeatedly submitted the working paper on this subject to the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process, including in the current cycle.

Enhancing transparency and the reporting mechanism within this review process is important for the accountability of both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. In particular, efforts undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States to enhance transparency by submitting their national reports, together with the discussion of these reports – including explanations and exchanges of information about their nuclear doctrine, strategy and capability – contribute to consolidating the common basis for confidence-building measures and nuclear disarmament efforts.

In this regard, the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative has made the following proposals, among others: (a) all States parties should report on the implementation by all member States; (b) all nuclear-weapon States are strongly encouraged to agree on a standard reporting form and to further explain and share information regarding issues covered in their reports; and (c) all States parties should agree on having an interactive discussion both at the review conferences and in the preparatory committees and on making future regular national reports at specified frequencies.

Nationally, Japan has also actively contributed to increasing transparency regarding nuclear weapons, for example, by submitting the national working paper entitled “Transparency, reporting and strengthening the review process” (NPT/CONF.2015/WP.32) to the 2015 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

Japan also submits a draft resolution on the elimination of nuclear weapons to the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly every year. Last year’s resolution, General Assembly resolution 75/71, on joint courses of action and future-oriented dialogue towards a world without nuclear weapons, was adopted with 150 votes in favour. The resolution encourages all States, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to immediately take concrete measures to enhance transparency and mutual confidence, including, *inter alia*, by providing frequent and detailed reporting on the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and opportunities for discussion of these reports. Japan believes that this proposal may provide a common basis for the tenth Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

To strengthen transparency, the Group of Eminent Persons for Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament, which Japan has been promoting since 2017, has also made a variety of proposals. For example, its Chair’s report published in November 2019 stated that nuclear-weapon States could agree to report on their nuclear-weapon systems and weapons-usable nuclear material holdings in an agreed common format.

Japan believes that transparency in arms control regimes relating to other types of weapons is equally important. In particular, in the field of conventional weapons, transparency is key to fostering mutual trust among member States with respect to each other’s armaments and to preventing the excessive accumulation of armaments. From this perspective, Japan played an active role in launching the Register of Conventional Arms, which requires United Nations Member States to provide information on their import, export, military holdings and procurement through national production of conventional weapons. Japan has been reporting to the Register every year since its establishment in 1993. Japan calls on all United Nations Member States to provide the Secretary-General of the United Nations with the information requested in accordance with the relevant resolutions.

Other international instruments related to conventional weapons, such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms, also provide useful reporting mechanisms. Japan also calls for the implementation of such reporting mechanisms.

Transparency and confidence-building measures are equally vital in the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention. Japan has contributed to enhancing transparency and confidence-building measures by, for example, presenting a working paper (BWC/MSP/2019/MX.3/WP.2/Rev.1) to the Meeting of Experts in 2019 with a view to increasing the number of submissions of reports on confidence-building measures by States parties. On this occasion, allow me to reiterate our call to States parties to submit an annual report containing information on research centres and laboratories, research programmes, outbreaks of infectious diseases and domestic legislation, regulations and other measures, as well as vaccine production facilities.

In order not only to foster trust among countries, but also to enhance the credibility of arms control regimes, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty, efforts taken by each member State to be as accountable and transparent as possible are of great value. Japan will continue to make concrete contributions to further strengthen such efforts.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Nigeria.

Mr. Adejola (Nigeria) (via video link): Madam President, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, permit me to congratulate you and Canada on the assumption of your duties as the fifth President of the Conference on Disarmament for the 2021 session. As you steer the course of our work, my delegation is confident that your experience will guide our deliberations going forward. We assure you of our full cooperation and also seize this opportunity to express our full pledge to cooperate with you and our appreciation of all six presidents of the 2021 Conference on Disarmament session – namely, Belgium, Brazil,

Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada and Chile – for working so assiduously to sustain the work of the Conference.

We also extend our congratulations to the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference on Disarmament, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, for her work as Secretary-General of this Conference.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 21. That said, Madam President, my delegation would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

While I congratulate the Conference on Disarmament for its past historic achievements in nuclear disarmament, particularly the painstaking efforts that culminated in the negotiation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and others, it is rather sad and unfortunate that the Conference on Disarmament has since become, in our view, quite redundant and has for over two decades failed to negotiate any legally binding instrument. And for us, the programme of work of the Conference, which should supposedly be routine for any serious-minded conference, has become an albatross around the neck of the Conference on Disarmament, which has again this year failed to adopt a programme of work.

Since achieving independence in 1960, Nigeria has underscored the importance of nuclear disarmament and, as far back as 1962, we joined the United Nations Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament, a precursor to the Committee on Disarmament that was itself later to metamorphose into the Conference on Disarmament, the world's only permanent multilateral disarmament treaty-negotiating body.

In pursuance of a nuclear-free world, my country, alongside other African countries, negotiated the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, or Treaty of Pelindaba; to all intents and purposes, this Treaty prohibits, among other things, research on and the development, manufacture and stockpiling of nuclear explosive devices on our territory. We are very active in this area, to the extent that we also significantly addressed the issue of dumping of radioactive waste on territories. The Treaty represents Africa's repudiation of nuclear weapons as well as its determination to ensure that the continent of Africa is totally free of any weapons of mass destruction, and should not be used as a guinea pig for the testing of any device. The entry into force for my country of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a treaty that Nigeria worked so assiduously, alongside other eminent countries, to negotiate and bring to fruition, is also indicative of our determination to rid the world of nuclear weapons. As preparations are ongoing to hold the first meeting of States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in the first quarter of next year, Nigeria urges States that have not signed and ratified the Treaty to do so.

It goes without saying that there is no better trajectory for the world but the path that leads us to the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. It is saddening that, despite the knowledge that we all possess of the apparent threat to mankind that nuclear weapons possess, we are still battling to eliminate them. Many States continue to channel very scarce resources and manpower that should have been allocated to human development into the production and development of the one sure threat that mankind faces today, when efforts should, we believe, have been channelled towards achieving human security for all.

The ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is a case in point, and its health, socioeconomic and other negative fallouts have exposed all our vulnerabilities across all divides and have further highlighted that, if we are moving in the wrong direction, we have to address that issue; it is not the number of nuclear weapons we have amassed that will save us, but the level of human security we are able to achieve in our world that will determine the survival of the world. I urge all Governments and nations, particularly nuclear-weapon States, to begin to steer away from the path of nuclear destruction to one that seeks to establish human security in all its forms. That is the only sure trajectory for humanity. Like Sadako Sasaki, the little girl who was 2 years old when the Hiroshima bombing took place and was diagnosed with leukaemia at the age of 10, we must all keep working determinedly to eliminate nuclear weapons until we achieve their total elimination.

In 2021, once again, the Conference on Disarmament has failed to agree on a programme of work, let alone commence negotiation on a legally binding instrument on any of its core mandates. Because of that stalemate and its redundancy over the last more than 20 years, the Conference on Disarmament is beginning to be viewed as a toothless bulldog and a yearly talk show without anything to show for it. And it is for this reason that my delegation strongly believes it is time to correct this negative narrative about the Conference on Disarmament.

The 2020 Meeting of Experts of the Biological Weapons Convention, which was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, is due to be held from 30 August to 8 September 2021, and presents an opportunity for member States to continue to work towards achieving international peace and security. How successfully we handle the Meeting of Experts will be our report card for the year 2021. But, in the same vein, the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which is now scheduled to take place in January 2022 at United Nations headquarters, subject to COVID developments, is also an auspicious opportunity for the disarmament community to trudge on.

My delegation fully welcomes the introduction of agenda item 7, on transparency in armaments, for discussion in plenary. Our highest expectation, however, remains the total elimination of nuclear weapons by States that possess those weapons, in order to fulfil, in good faith, their legal obligations as highlighted in article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Nigeria remains concerned about the growing threat to international peace and security as a result of the increasing lack of transparency in nuclear disarmament, and particularly the failure to renew international instruments, including the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, that seemingly promote transparency in nuclear arms control.

It is pertinent to recall that, in addition to introducing unprecedented transparency in nuclear arms control, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty became the first nuclear disarmament agreement that required the elimination of nuclear-capable systems and included provisions to ensure the irreversibility of nuclear reductions. In this regard, the failure to renew the Treaty is thus a concern to my country. And, while nuclear-weapon States have shown more seriousness and interest in ensuring that peaceful nuclear programmes in non-nuclear-weapon States are fully transparent, due largely to the application of international safeguards administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency, nuclear-weapon States have shrouded their military nuclear activities in secrecy. All aspects of fissile material and warhead production, warhead numbers, deployments and capabilities, have, to a great extent, continued to be closely guarded and classified as national secrets.

Transparency in nuclear arms control and disarmament has become critical in light of the growing threat to international peace and security, particularly from certain nuclear-capable States and non-State actors, including terrorists. Transparency is pertinent given that accountability can help prevent theft and diversion of nuclear warheads and materials and transparency measures result in greater predictability about the capabilities of States, thus facilitating common understandings, easing tensions and decreasing nuclear dangers.

In this connection, it is pertinent to mention the effort of my country and other members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative in respect of transparency. Established in September 2010, the group comprises, in addition to my own country, Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, and focuses primarily on practical steps that seek to promote the consensus outcomes of the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and greater transparency in the way nuclear-weapon States fulfil their disarmament commitments.

In conclusion, Nigeria urges all members of the Conference on Disarmament to look beyond our national interests towards the greater good of a world free of nuclear weapons. The Conference on Disarmament should halt its continuous slide into a forum that discusses procedural matters at the expense of its core mandate of negotiating legally binding disarmament instruments. We, as members, have turned this once noble conference that negotiated major disarmament treaties into a laughing stock. So that is why we are calling out to everyone and all members that this narrative has to change; the onus is on us, all 65 member States, to do so.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Nigeria for his statement. Distinguished colleagues, I now give the floor to our new colleague from Ukraine.

Ms. Filipenko (Ukraine): Madam President, distinguished colleagues, since this is my first intervention in my new capacity as the permanent representative of Ukraine to the Conference on Disarmament, please allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of your duties and to thank you and other colleagues for your warm words of welcome. Please be assured of my delegation's full cooperation with you, the secretariat and all partner countries to advance the objectives of the Conference on Disarmament in these incredibly challenging circumstances.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the Canadian presidency for organizing this thematic discussion with a focus on agenda item 7, transparency in armaments. Let me start by saying that Ukraine fully supports appropriate and feasible transparency measures in armaments to promote mutual trust between States and regions and to enhance world peace, security and stability.

We believe that the mechanisms for the exchange of information set up within the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Wassenaar Arrangement have opened spaces for discussion and interaction between States and made it possible to establish minimum standards of transparency. The Register of Conventional Arms has contributed to the legitimacy of the practice of information-sharing. It is also a unique source of information on international arms transfers.

At the same time, Ukraine remains gravely concerned about the fact that the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of armaments continue to pose threats to international peace and security, cause significant loss of life and contribute to instability and insecurity in many regions of the world.

When fully implemented, the conventional arms control regime and confidence- and security-building measures can play an important role in ensuring military stability, transparency and predictability in Europe and beyond. The current regional security landscape has undergone dramatic transformations as the fundamental principles and commitments and imperative norms of international law have been underlined.

The Russian Federation remains the biggest source of these negative developments. By waging armed aggression against Ukraine and Georgia and occupying parts of their sovereign territories, Russia has turned these areas into grey zones inaccessible to verification activities and has excluded them from military information-exchange under arms control instruments and confidence- and security-building measures regimes. The Russian Federation holds huge amounts of weaponry, military personnel and information on these territories. We strongly appeal for the full restoration of the zone of application of all arms control instruments and confidence- and security-building measures regimes over the entirety of the territories of Ukraine and Georgia within the internationally recognized borders. The only way to achieve this goal is the full, unconditional and immediate de-occupation and demilitarization by Russia of these territories.

Russia's decision to withdraw from the Treaty on Open Skies did not come as a surprise to us. In this way, the Russian Federation completes the course it deliberately set out upon in the mid-2000s to destroy all regimes that have contributed to military restraint in Europe, limited the deployment of offensive weapons and prevented sudden large-scale military activities in the Europe/Atlantic region.

This year's provocative and destabilizing no-notice, large-scale military build-up by Russia near the border with Ukraine – an illegal concentration of troops and military equipment in the temporarily occupied Crimea and its territorial waters – constituted yet another blow to established arms control instruments and the regime of confidence- and security-building measures and remain of paramount concern to us.

The international community resolutely condemned these actions in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly resolution adopted on 7 July this year. Ukraine remains committed to the full implementation in both letter and spirit of existing commitments under conventional arms control instruments and the regime of confidence- and security-building

measures. We support the modernization of the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and the development of further such measures.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has been putting into practice new and enhanced arrangements for the implementation of the Vienna Document under the ongoing external aggression and temporary occupation of parts of its territory. In particular, in a spirit of openness and transparency, Ukraine has been doing its utmost in such difficult circumstances to enable other States to conduct above-quota inspections in areas of concern. Ukraine has expanded the scope of inspections, allowing the inspection teams to receive a wide range of briefings from regional authorities in other State institutions.

Ukraine remains committed to the full and faithful implementation of its obligations under the Treaty on Open Skies. Ukraine conducted a total of 50 observation flights under the active quota and hosted 53 observational missions in its territory, including 48 passive quota missions, 4 training flights together with other participating States and one emergency mission as part of a multinational team of observers. Additionally, in order to strengthen confidence and security at the regional level, Ukraine is steadfastly fulfilling its obligations under bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries.

In different international forums, Ukraine has raised the issue of illegal arms transfers from the Russian Federation to the temporarily occupied territories of Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. There is sufficient and credible evidence provided by the OSCE international monitors, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its European representatives, and members of the Security Council of the United Nations, as well as mass media reports that such transfers are going on. It is worth mentioning that a large amount of small arms and light weapons continue to be moved to the occupied regions of Ukraine from Russian territory under the pretext of the so-called humanitarian convoys. The illegal international transfers of military goods and equipment from the Russian Federation to the occupied Crimea and across the uncontrolled sections of the Ukrainian/Russian border in Donbas clearly contravene international law and key principles of transparency and armaments and must not be tolerated, must not go unanswered.

To conclude, allow me to reiterate Ukraine's belief that, in order to move forward in the field of disarmament, we have to first ensure compliance by all Member States of the United Nations with the existing arms control and non-proliferation international instruments, while preventing their further erosion; this has to be confirmed by concrete actions. This would facilitate the emergence of trust and confidence, key pillars of our productive work here in the Conference on Disarmament. Ukraine will continue to contribute to genuine endeavours aimed at achieving the goals and objectives of the Conference on Disarmament as a vital element of the rules-based international order and is looking forward to working as a reliable and responsible partner closely with you, Madam President, and all willing member States in order to find a breakthrough as soon as possible.

The President: I thank the Ambassador for her statement. I now give the floor to the delegate of the United States of America.

Ms. McKernan (United States of America): Madam President, I too would like to extend a warm welcome to the new Ambassador from Ukraine and our virtual Ambassador from Nigeria. It is a pleasure to have them with us here.

The United States welcomes today's opportunity to discuss transparency in armaments. We have strongly supported this concept since its inception and continue to do so. Transparency is the foundation on which the international community can build trust, avoid misunderstanding and miscommunication whenever possible, and resolve the issues that arise.

The transparency in armaments initiative arose at the end of the cold war, when many of us questioned the relevance of a multilateral security agenda that focused exclusively on weapons of mass destruction and failed to address conventional weapons. The violent conflicts of the 1980s and Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 pushed the international community into action. We had to balance the notion of the need for a system of transparency with the sovereign rights of States to defend themselves.

The negotiations were complex – even tortuous – but we persevered and successfully adopted General Assembly resolution 46/36L, entitled “Transparency in armaments”, on 6 December 1991. In doing so, we created a two-track process. The first track established the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The second called for this body, the Conference on Disarmament, to take up the subject.

By any measure, the Register has been a resounding success, establishing a global norm of transparency and accountability in military matters and reinforcing civilian control over the military. Since its establishment in 1992, more than 170 countries have reported to the Register at least once, and it is estimated that its reporting captures more than 90 per cent of the international trade in conventional arms. Members participate from every United Nations regional group. The Register has been used as a foundation by the Organization of American States and other regional organizations to build on and to address regional security concerns. It also provided the starting point for the negotiation of the Arms Trade Treaty. The Register truly is a global confidence-building and transparency measure.

A series of meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts have been convened by the Secretary-General to review the Register’s operation and make recommendations on its further development. These meetings have led to the expansion of the Register to include additional weapons, with man-portable air defence systems and artillery between 75 mm and 100 mm being added in 2003, naval warships between 500 and 750 metric tons in 2006, and small arms and light weapons and armed unmanned aerial vehicles in 2019. These substantive additions demonstrate the Register’s continuing vitality and relevance.

As a separate, parallel initiative, the Department of State of the United States also publishes on an annual basis the “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers”, which is a series of publications designed to be a convenient reference on annual military expenditures, arms transfers, armed forces, selected economic data and relative indicators consisting of pertinent military-economic ratios. The aim is to provide the arms-control and international security community with useful, comprehensive and accurate data, accompanied by analyses and highlights.

While the level of annual participation in the Register has been high compared to other United Nations transparency instruments, such as the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures, it has fluctuated over the years. In the 1990s, an average of 94 States participated each year. Between 2000 and 2007, participation increased to an average of 103 States each year. Unfortunately, the level of participation in the Register since 2008 has declined significantly, to a low of 33 States in 2020.

Part of this decline can be ascribed to its very success as a global transparency measure, with the rise of one of its progeny, the Arms Trade Treaty, which had its beginnings in the work of a United Nations Group of Governmental Experts in 2008. The Arms Trade Treaty built on the United Nations register of heavy weapons by adding small arms and light weapons. This made the Treaty more directly relevant to the security concerns of a greater number of States. In 2019, the Register responded to this by expanding to include the reporting of transfers of small arms and light weapons.

There has also been some confusion over the relationship between the United Nations Register and the Arms Trade Treaty. The entry into force of the Treaty in 2014 appears to have led some of its States parties to conclude that the Treaty has made the Register superfluous, based on the assumption that a legally binding treaty requiring reporting of international transfers trumps a voluntary confidence-building measure. They fail to recognize that the two instruments serve different purposes and actually complement each other. The Arms Trade Treaty is intended to ensure that the international trade in conventional arms is conducted in a responsible manner; the United Nations Register is intended to help prevent excessive and destabilizing accumulations of conventional arms. States who are parties to the Arms Trade Treaty should submit data to both the Arms Trade Treaty secretariat and the United Nations Register, not just to one or the other.

The United Nations will convene another group of governmental experts in 2022, and a major focus of its discussions will be how to arrest the decline in national reporting and how to reinforce the Register’s role as a global confidence-building measure promoting

international peace and stability. The United States looks forward to the discussion. Unfortunately, the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to do its part.

Our task was to “address as soon as possible, the question of interrelated aspects of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms, including holdings and procurement through national production, and to elaborate universal and non-discriminatory practical means to increase openness and transparency in this field” and to “address the problems of, and the elaboration of practical means to increase, openness and transparency related to the transfer of high technology with military applications and to weapons of mass destruction”. No time frame was specified for the Conference on Disarmament’s work, but I have to believe that our predecessors would not consider 30 years to be “as soon as possible”.

The Conference on Disarmament had a promising start on transparency in armaments. We added it in 1992 as the first new agenda item in over 10 years and the first one directly related to conventional arms control. Informal meetings were held during the first year to introduce the Conference to the subject. In 1993, the Conference established the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments, which began working to develop practical means for increasing openness and transparency in military matters.

Unfortunately, at that point things started to go off course. The Ad Hoc Committee split into two camps: those who wanted to discuss transparency in conventional weapons and those who wanted to discuss transparency in weapons of mass destruction. Despite discussing 16 working papers and a host of other suggestions, the Ad Hoc Committee was never able to bridge the differences to find common ground on concrete proposals.

In 1995, these differences spilled over into a general debate in the Conference on Disarmament on the relationship between conventional and nuclear disarmament and the Conference established just two ad hoc committees that year, one on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty and the other on a fissile material cut-off treaty. The negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty proceeded, but unfortunately, despite the fact that the Conference on Disarmament established an ad hoc committee on a fissile material cut-off treaty in 1995, the Conference failed to select a chair and it was held hostage to an agreement on the re-establishment of ad hoc committees on transparency in armaments, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. The rest is history. That was the origin of the paralysis that afflicts this Conference today.

Fast-forward to today, and we have reached the point that establishing any ad hoc committee would be a demonstration of progress in the Conference on Disarmament. We would do well to remember that it was not always so, and that the motivating concept behind the transparency in armaments initiative is as valid today as it was then.

To that end, the United States continues to support the need for the Conference on Disarmament to elaborate practical means to increase transparency, as we were tasked to do. We believe this topic is germane to all the core agenda items and should be included in discussions on all of them. To that end, we regret, again, that we could not establish or even agree to informal discussions on subsidiary bodies this year.

The President: I thank the delegate of the United States of America for her statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Sharma (India) (*via video link*): Madam President, at the outset, India has the pleasure of welcoming Ambassador Adejola of Nigeria and Ambassador Filipenko of Ukraine to the Conference on Disarmament family and would like to assure them of our full support and cooperation during their tenure here in Geneva. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of Ms. Valovaya, Secretary-General of the Conference, among us.

We learned a few days ago that Ambassador Mya Than, one of the former permanent representatives of Myanmar to the Conference on Disarmament had passed away. India would like to pay tribute to Ambassador Than, who distinguished himself as an able representative of his country in the Conference and greatly contributed to our work in this body.

India also joins the colleagues who have spoken before me in expressing our sincere condolences on the loss of lives due to the recent natural disasters.

Today's discussion in the Conference is on an important agenda item related to transparency in armaments. India believes that transparency is a necessary tool for confidence-building and enhancing mutual trust among States. In order to secure the widest possible participation of States and contribute effectively to the process of confidence-building, measures to promote transparency in armaments should be mutually agreed upon by all States. Measures to enhance transparency in armaments must also respect the inherent right of States to self-defence, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Such measures cannot restrict or prejudice the legitimate right of States to acquire or produce arms for self-defence and in pursuit of their national security interests.

Regarding transparency related to weapons of mass destruction, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention provide the essential frameworks governing biological and chemical weapons respectively. As to transparency with respect to nuclear weapons, India believes that it cannot be a standalone factor, but should form part of an agreed multilateral framework covering all States possessing nuclear weapons, consistent with their national security interests.

With respect to conventional weapons, India has supported the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms and has regularly submitted national reports to the Register. India has participated actively in the three-yearly reviews of the Register and supports efforts for further improving it along with efforts towards universalizing participation. India has also supported the resolution on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditure. India also contributed to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures in 2011. India has regularly submitted its national reports to the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms, as well as under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its protocols. India has also been a member of the Wassenaar Arrangement since 2017. India looks forward to engaging with fellow member States on this important aspect of our work.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of India for his statement. I would like to offer our condolences to the family and friends of Ambassador Than of Myanmar. I now give the floor to the delegate of France.

Ms. Delaroche (France) (*via video link, spoke in French*): Madam President, I welcome the Secretary-General of the Conference, who is with us today, and my delegation welcomes the Ambassador of Nigeria and the Ambassador of Ukraine. I also join in the messages of condolence to the countries that have suffered from the floods and to the families of the victims.

France recognizes the fundamental nature of transparency in respect of disarmament and arms control; today's topic would be an opportunity for us to discuss many things, such as the efforts of the French presidency of the process being pursued by the nuclear-weapon States, known as the P5 process, to promote transparency in nuclear doctrines and strategic risk reduction, or transparency efforts in the context of the Arms Trade Treaty or the Biological Weapons Convention. However, I would like to focus my remarks today on one particular subject. General Assembly resolution 75/36, sponsored by the United Kingdom and co-sponsored by France, on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, is an important step towards identifying threats in space, characterizing them and, ultimately, developing norms for responsible behaviours in space. France has supported this initiative from the beginning and wishes to continue to contribute actively to the debate on it.

In this connection, France has sent its national contribution to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, pursuant to the mandate contained in the resolution. Resolution 75/36 also calls on States to present their policies on space to the Conference on Disarmament. This is an important measure intended to improve the transparency of space activities, while reducing the risk of errors of judgment or calculation. We therefore wish to take the opportunity offered by the inclusion of item 7, on transparency, on the agenda of the Conference today to present the broad lines of our space defence strategy.

At the request of the President of the Republic, the Ministry of the Armed Forces has developed a new national space defence strategy, in order to take into account the changing realities of the space environment and the growing threats to our space assets, which are essential capabilities for the daily lives of our citizens and our economies. The strategy was published on 25 July 2019 and is available to download in both French and English on the Ministry's website. The space defence strategy reaffirms the essential nature of satellites to our security, as well as our economy. It takes note of the increase in strategic, economic and industrial competition between States and the appearance of a broad range of threats beyond the traditional kinetic threats, all of which make space an environment of rivalry and confrontation open to the risk of escalation. Since the strategy was published two years ago, the strategic and operational environment in space has clearly become harsher, with increasing numbers of unfriendly and ambiguous events, some of which – such as unannounced satellite approach attempts – have even been provocative or, in any case, worrying in terms of strategic stability.

There is an international legal framework for space that guarantees freedom of exploration and access, and its peaceful use. It is essential that we preserve that framework and ensure free access to space for all. Our strategy is in conformity with these fundamental principles. It does not call into question respect for the fundamental principles of space law to which France subscribes, particularly the principles of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. Furthermore, it complies with all existing international law including, in particular, the Charter of the United Nations, which applies fully to space.

The space defence strategy thus aims, in accordance with international law, to provide a capability, organizational, operational and diplomatic response to this new strategic context, through an approach based on international cooperation, in order to protect and more effectively defend our freedom of action and access to space and to strengthen our strategic autonomy.

Its first objective is to develop, sustain and improve our military strategic intelligence and operations support capabilities, while strengthening our ability to understand and continuously monitor activity in all orbits of interest in an autonomous manner. We also intend to equip ourselves, by 2030, with an active defence capability, within the framework of a self-defence strategy, in order to protect the satellites that contribute to our national interests, so as to discourage any aggression and to be able, if necessary, to defend our interests in an appropriate and proportionate manner, in strict compliance with public international law and, in particular, with the Charter of the United Nations, including its Article 51 on the right to self-defence. In practical terms, we already have our own space monitoring capabilities, thanks to, for example, the radars of the French National Office for Aerospace Studies and Research (ONERA) and the Ariane Group network of telescopes. To be very clear, the kinetic and mechanical destruction of satellites would generate debris, and we are therefore strongly opposed to it. Indeed, our strategy proposes a standard that would prohibit the voluntary creation of long-lived debris.

The second objective is to continue with the reorganization of our space defence internally and, in September 2019, we established a single point of command that brings together the skills of the armed forces to support the space defence strategy in all areas. It currently numbers 30 persons.

The third objective is to take advantage of and contribute to the opportunities offered by “new space”. We must build and consolidate our strategic autonomy by seizing the possibilities offered by “new space” and reinventing our industrial model.

Fourthly, we would like to give priority to cooperation, especially international cooperation, an essential element in consolidating our strategic autonomy. It will involve expanding cooperation with our partners and allies in the field of space operations and opening up to new partnerships. France has a wealth of experience in bilateral cooperation in Europe, sharing Earth observation and satellite communications capabilities. Indeed, cooperation within the European Union on civilian programmes that include security components is at the heart of our space policy. The French Presidency of the European Union, which will begin in January 2022, will be an opportunity to maintain our ambitions in the space field at a high level.

Diplomatic efforts to strengthen these principles are an integral part of our strategy. France will continue to play a full role in developing regulations that are pragmatic, effective and immediately applicable in the space environment. This requires, first and foremost, a special effort to develop standards of responsible behaviour so as to guarantee strategic stability and avoid the possibility of misunderstandings or escalation. We are ready to work with all interested States. That is the objective of General Assembly resolution 75/36, which we support. Moreover, one of our collective priorities must be to achieve a ban on the intentional destruction of satellites, which generates long-lived debris that can make access to space more difficult, since it represents a major risk for the space environment.

As the Minister of the Armed Forces has emphasized, we are most certainly not engaged in an arms race. Our priority is to continue our diplomatic efforts, notably with our European partners but also more broadly, with all interested States, to guarantee the peaceful use of space. With the publication of its space defence strategy, which it has presented to the Conference on Disarmament today, France has made an unprecedented effort to promote transparency. It thus continues to set an example, by saying what it is doing and doing what it says.

The President : I thank the representative of France for her statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, Madam President, I would like to take this opportunity to join you in warmly welcoming the Ambassadors of Nigeria and Ukraine to their posts, and I look forward to active communication and cooperation with them in the Conference.

Madam President, transparency in armaments is an arms control concept that was endorsed and promoted by the General Assembly after the end of the cold war. At that time, the international security environment, fundamentally characterized by the confrontation between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact, experienced a profound relaxation. The general membership of the United Nations expects the superpowers to abandon the cold war mentality, enhance strategic mutual trust, promote bilateral nuclear disarmament, and advance international and regional peace, security and stability.

Over the past three decades, a series of important changes have taken place in the international and regional political and security situation. Maintaining global strategic security and promoting international peace and stability have always been the popular will of the international community. However, the ghosts of the cold war persist and the mentality of that time is still the primary mindset of individual countries in their understanding of the world and in their handling of international relations.

Facing the new situation as well as a new era, as State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi pointed out in his video address to the Conference last month, all countries should actively pursue a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable concept of security, resolutely resist the cold war mentality and zero-sum games, abandon exceptionalism and double standards, and work towards common, universal and lasting security.

Looking back to the past and forward to the future, it is worthwhile for member States of the Conference on Disarmament to seriously consider and explore how transparency in armaments can continue to be practised in the international arms control regime and how it can become a lasting and useful means of promoting and maintaining international peace and security.

First of all, it needs to be noted that transparency is not an end in itself, but one of the means to promote trust, avoid miscalculation and ease tensions. Transparency is not a game played in a vacuum and is closely correlated with the international security environment, the security strategies of countries and the security relations between countries. As national conditions, policies and strengths vary greatly from country to country, there are no global uniformly applicable transparency standards and requirements. Whether at the global or the regional level, only reasonable and feasible transparency measures can be realistic and useful in a lasting way.

Secondly, transparency does not necessarily bring peace and security. It must be based on the principle of undiminished security for all countries and be built on an autonomous and voluntary basis. Under the Charter of the United Nations, Member States have the right to possess and maintain military defence capabilities commensurate with their legitimate self-defence needs. No system of transparency should diminish or undermine the aforementioned rights of States, nor should it compromise their legitimate security interests. No country, large or small, should impose transparency to the detriment of others, nor should it accept transparency that brings insecurity.

Thirdly, transparency requires cooperation; it is difficult to achieve in confrontation. An important prerequisite for transparency is that countries have a sufficient basis for mutual trust and respect for each other's security concerns. If this prerequisite is lacking, or is disregarded, "transparency" becomes hypocritical and meaningless, and can become a tool for the strong to bully the weak. On the other hand, advocating strategic rivalry between major powers and insisting on seeing other countries as adversaries and imaginary enemies clearly does not help to make adversaries more transparent. I'm afraid this is a truth that even psychologists can explain; there's hardly a need to ask arms control experts about it.

Madam President, China is of the view that the discussions and substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament on the subject of transparency in armaments should keep pace with the times, be based on international security realities, fully respect the security concerns and reasonable proposals of member States, and make new efforts to further explore the issue of transparency in armaments on the basis of the previous work carried out within the United Nations framework.

The Chinese delegation stands ready to participate actively in this important work.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement. I now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Australia.

Ms. Hill (Australia): Thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting today. I would like to join others in extending my delegation's welcome to the distinguished Ambassadors of Nigeria and Ukraine.

Australia welcomes the opportunity for a discussion today on agenda item 7, on "Transparency in armaments". We think it is important that the Conference on Disarmament engages in discussions on transparency, whether that be in relation to conventional armaments, nuclear issues, biological, space or other matters relevant to international security.

Madam President, you mentioned in your national remarks the important work being done by the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative on the issue of transparency, and so did the distinguished ambassadors of Japan and Nigeria. Australia would also like to highlight this work.

The Initiative considers the principle of transparency, like those of irreversibility and verifiability, to be indispensable for nuclear disarmament. The reason for this is simple: increased transparency builds confidence and trust at regional and international levels, which can in turn establish a common ground for dialogue and negotiation. We would like to see strong outcomes on transparency at the forthcoming Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

As outlined in the working papers of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, the latter has made a number of proposals in this regard, including that all States parties should report with accurate, up-to-date and complete information on the fulfilment of their obligations and commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty; that nuclear-weapon States should improve the transparency of information related to their nuclear weapons without prejudice to their national security, and should continue efforts to agree on a standard reporting form; that future preparatory committees in review conferences should allocate time to discuss the reports by all States parties; and that at least one preparatory commission session in the review cycle should allocate time specifically to discussing the reports of nuclear-weapon States.

More broadly, given the benefits of transparency, Australia strongly encourages States to continue to make information on their security policies available, including through

statements to this Conference such as the ones we have heard today. In this regard, I would like to thank France for sharing with us their space security policy consistent with General Assembly resolution 75/36. As space becomes a more congested and contested domain, we consider it important that States supply transparency principles in relation to their space security policies.

In Australia's Defence Strategic Update and Force Structure Plan, released in 2020, the Australian Government announced its plans for investing in defence space capabilities over the next decade. Our defence force is working closely with international partners, the Australian Space Agency and industry to transform the way the Australian Defence Force operates in space, including in relation to satellite communications, space domain awareness, precision navigation and timing, and intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance. To underpin this, Australia is currently working on a new defence space security policy and we look forward to presenting that at the Conference on Disarmament next year. We encourage others to do likewise.

The President: I thank the delegate of Australia for her statement and I now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of the Philippines.

Mr. Domingo (Philippines): Madam President, on behalf of the Philippines, I wish to express appreciation for your leadership of this Conference. We also join this Conference in welcoming the new ambassadors of Nigeria and Ukraine. Like the Ambassador of India, we join our colleagues from Myanmar in honouring the memory of the distinguished former Ambassador of Myanmar, Mr. Than.

I further wish to echo our colleague from Russia and others in expressing condolences to the victims of recent flooding in many areas. As a champion of disaster risk reduction, the Philippines emphasizes the need for international cooperation to enhance our capacities to "build back better".

The Philippines takes the floor to add its voice to consistent calls for greater transparency in armaments, which is a fundamental tenet of all multilateral efforts towards disarmament and non-proliferation. We give due importance to Member States' and States parties' transparency obligations under all relevant General Assembly resolutions and disarmament instruments, including the Arms Trade Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

In our efforts to future-proof the humanitarian disarmament architecture, we are actively engaged in discussions to address the threat of lethal autonomous weapons systems or within the ambit of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. One of the elements of a normative and operational framework that we have identified in our national paper and joint working paper with five other States is transparency in the development of lethal autonomous weapons systems and other advanced weapon systems.

With regard to the Biological Weapons Convention, we have strived to submit reports on confidence-building measures. We recognize the value of this tool and other voluntary confidence-building measures in promoting transparency, even as discussions on institutionalized monitoring, assessment and verification remain ongoing. We likewise emphasize the importance of transparency in space activities, as it contributes to enhancing space security.

Transparency, along with irreversibility and verifiability, are cardinal principles of nuclear disarmament under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Transparency is essential to building confidence and therefore contributes to efforts towards nuclear risk reduction.

The Philippines has worked consistently with our fellow members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative to promote this principle. As you yourself, Madam President, and our colleagues from Japan, Nigeria and Australia have mentioned, the Initiative has consistently submitted working papers on transparency to the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process, including in the current cycle.

We recall actions 20 and 21 of the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference, which was negotiated under the Philippine presidency. These action points oblige States

parties to submit regular transparency reports and, as a confidence-building measure, encourage all nuclear-weapon States to agree on a standardized reporting form. We encourage all nuclear-weapon States to adopt the standardized reporting format that the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative has recommended. We also encourage nuclear-weapon States to conduct consultations on the drafting of their national reports and to further explain and share information regarding the issues covered in their reports. We commend those that have already done so.

Together with the other members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, we encourage States parties to allocate time for interactive discussions both at the review conferences and in the preparatory committees, and to submit regular national reports at specified frequencies.

Finally, we urge this Conference to promote the principle of transparency across all multilateral processes as we work towards disarmament and non-proliferation in all spheres.

The President: I thank the delegate of the Philippines for his statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Madam President, let me start by welcoming our new colleagues from Nigeria and Ukraine; my delegation really looks forward to working with them in the future.

Madam President, I would like to thank you for organizing a separate plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament on agenda item 7, transparency in armaments. The Netherlands attaches great importance to this topic.

Allow me to highlight some national perspectives on the subject of transparency in armaments, including some of the activities undertaken by the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. Progress on disarmament and on confidence-building are crucial to promoting international peace and security. Transparency in armaments has long been recognized as an important stepping stone for disarmament efforts. It is therefore important for the Conference on Disarmament to continue to work on this topic. Considering the tenth Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference process in the light of our agenda, our focus is on nuclear disarmament in this intervention.

Transparency is not only important in nuclear disarmament but also in the review and implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. By building confidence and trust between States, both at regional and international levels, increased transparency helps to establish a common ground for dialogue and negotiation that can facilitate further reductions in nuclear weapons and moves towards their total elimination.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty review process has made certain progress in giving additional responsibilities to the permanent members of the Security Council to increase their reporting and transparency commitments, as evidenced by the action plan contained in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference. However, there exist no specific transparency or accountability mechanisms for nuclear disarmament obligations of nuclear-weapon States, even though, according to action 21 of the 2010 action plan, nuclear-weapon States should have agreed on a standard reporting form. A standard reporting form is necessary to ensure the same level of transparency across the reports of different nuclear-weapon States, on the one hand, and to establish a baseline to measure progress, on the other. That is why the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative developed a standard reporting form: one for nuclear-weapon States in 2012, one for non-nuclear-weapon States proposed in 2015, and one for both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States in 2017.

Furthermore, efforts to enhance transparency measures, including the exchange of information about nuclear doctrines, strategy and capability, can contribute to better functioning of accountability mechanisms, especially when nuclear-weapon States are demonstrating their implementation of all articles of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, in particular of article VI. Transparency and information includes, but is not limited to, the number, type and status of nuclear warheads, the number and types of delivery vehicles, the amount of fissile material produced for military purposes, measures taken for risk reduction and measures taken to reduce the role and significance of nuclear weapons.

In closing, my delegation hopes that nuclear-weapon States will provide updated national implementation reports in the run-up to the tenth Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. While these reports are, of course, part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty framework, my delegation is also open to exploring how the Conference on Disarmament can further contribute to increased transparency in the field of nuclear disarmament.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands for his statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lim Sang-beom (Republic of Korea): Please allow me to assure you, Madam President, once again of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I also join other colleagues in welcoming our new colleagues, the ambassadors of Nigeria and Ukraine.

I would like to briefly reiterate our national position on today's topic for discussion, transparency in armaments. Most of all, we share the view that transparency in armaments contributes greatly to confidence-building and security among States. We have therefore been among the sponsors of the relevant General Assembly resolutions entitled "Transparency in armaments".

We believe, in particular, that transparency among nuclear-weapon States and beyond is one of the core elements in advancing nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In this regard, we once again welcome the extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty by the Governments of the United States and Russia. Indeed, the extension of this Treaty speaks to the fact that we can remain optimistic, even in this seemingly worsening security environment.

We also welcome the fact that the United States and Russia have embarked on an integrated bilateral strategic stability dialogue this week, as an immediate follow-up to the Presidential Joint Statement on Strategy and Stability. We sincerely hope that this dialogue can lay the groundwork for future arms control and enhanced transparency, not only between the two countries but for the whole world.

Furthermore, we hope that the dialogue among the permanent members of the Security Council (the P5) can be further strengthened and that their joint efforts will lead to concrete results which can be presented at the upcoming Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. In this regard, we appreciate the French effort to share with non-nuclear-weapon States the ongoing P5 discussions, which include a webinar on the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the P5 process last month.

As a member of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, the Republic of Korea once again highlights the importance of transparency, nuclear risk reduction and nuclear verification, among other things, in advancing nuclear disarmament, and requests the nuclear-weapon States to show leadership in this regard. The Republic of Korea is committed to staying engaged in this process.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea for his statement and I now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Turkey.

Ms. Erçelik (Turkey) (*via video link*): Madam President, I would like to join you in welcoming the Ambassador of Nigeria and the Ambassador of Ukraine to the Conference on Disarmament. I also would like to join previous speakers in extending our condolences to the countries where people have lost their lives during the devastating floods in many parts of the world and express our sympathies for all affected.

Madam President, please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of Turkey's full support to advance the work of the Conference.

Turkey regards the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation of the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. As a country that is a party to all the major international non-proliferation instruments regimes, Turkey remains committed to the full implementation and further strengthening of the Treaty with its three pillars.

Turkey's priority is to uphold the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a major instrument for reinforcing international peace, security and stability and to promote its universalization. The 1995 Review and Extension Conference and the 2010 action plan identified the main goals under the three pillars. Today's security environment is complex and volatile; this requires all States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty to act in cooperation and to offer solutions that will enable diplomacy and negotiations to strengthen the existing transparency goal.

Turkey fully shares the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We must advance towards that goal through practical steps, consensus and with the active participation of nuclear-weapon States as well as non-nuclear-weapon States. We must bear in mind that the Non-Proliferation Treaty is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. It provides a credible, comprehensive and constructive approach towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Turkey believes that there is a greater need for more detailed information related to nuclear weapons by all nuclear-weapon States to reduce tension and build confidence among States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In this context, additional information on non-strategic nuclear weapons would also be an important security- and confidence-building measure and would facilitate further progress in nuclear disarmament.

Turkey, as a member of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, will continue to contribute to the strengthening of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including by promoting greater transparency. The standardization of transparency of nuclear arsenals varies substantially across nuclear-weapon States. There is no international law that requires them to disclose the information about their nuclear forces or mechanism for them to do so. The Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative will continue to provide ideas for the coming Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, including by promoting greater transparency. The Initiative will also promote measures that bolster the Treaty's three pillars for enhancing the implementation of commitments and legally binding obligations. The Initiative's working paper that will soon be delivered to the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs will include recommendations to that effect.

In our opinion, by building confidence and trust, increased transparency by the end of the year would help establish the common ground for dialogue and negotiations that could facilitate further reductions in nuclear weapons and progress towards the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In addition, increased transparency would also provide additional reassurance of the commitment of nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty to implement their non-proliferation obligations under the Treaty.

The President: I thank the delegate of Turkey for her statement. I now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez-Hernández (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, we would like to add our voice to those that have expressed condolences to the countries whose people have been victims of natural disasters and other calamities around the world and, of course, of the victims of the terrible pandemic that is ravaging us.

Madam President, I also have the duty to strongly denounce the terrorist attack with Molotov cocktails against our embassy in Paris a few hours ago, which is part of a hate campaign, with calls for violence, destabilization, threats and media manipulation promoted against my country. All these occurrences can have serious consequences for the security of missions and diplomatic staff, in particular, and for international peace and security, in general.

I conclude by wishing you every success for your Presidency and reaffirming Cuba's full commitment to the disarmament agenda and, especially, to the mandate of this Conference.

The President: I thank the delegate of Cuba for his statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. Hashmi (Pakistan): Madam President, we join others in welcoming the ambassadors of Nigeria and Ukraine to this Conference.

The item under discussion today, transparency in armaments, inevitably has threads connecting it to other agenda items with respect to the larger arms control and disarmament questions. Nevertheless, I will limit my remarks to the importance of this item and the significance of its careful consideration by this body as an essential element for progress, as is indeed true for all agenda items.

Let me begin with a brief backdrop to the agenda item to lend coherence to our discussions. Three decades ago, the Conference on Disarmament was requested “to address as soon as possible the question of the interrelated aspects of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms, including military holdings and procurement through national production and to elaborate universal and non-discriminatory practical means to increase openness and transparency in this field”.

The Conference on Disarmament was also tasked “to address the problems of and the elaboration of practical means to increase openness and transparency related to the transfer of high technology with military applications and weapons of mass destruction”. The underlying premise was that increased openness and transparency in the field of armaments could enhance confidence, ease tensions, strengthen regional and international peace, as well as security, and contribute to restraints in military production and the transfer of arms. Central to this motion was the principle that no single State, especially in areas of tension, should be able to strive for levels of armaments that did not bear any relationship to its self-defence needs.

Notwithstanding the goals set out under this item, this Conference’s treatment of this agenda item has been less than satisfactory. As others have pointed out, an ad hoc committee on transparency and armaments was established in 1993 and worked until 1994. The Conference on Disarmament has since then been unable to reach agreement on its re-establishment.

Among the stumbling blocks have been the opposition by some to any consideration of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, high technology with military applications and other advanced conventional weapons when exploring further work under this item. Ironically, as I have just quoted, these were among the very reasons that form the rationale for the Conference on Disarmament’s consideration of this agenda item. The item therefore has since been handled mostly in informal meetings or has acted as a convenient placeholder for raising some aspects of conventional weapons.

This brief history of the item and its treatment lends itself to two major takeaways. Firstly, the rationale of bringing this item to the Conference on Disarmament highlights that transparency in armaments was and continues to be a means to an end, not an end in itself. Its ultimate objective remains to seek restraints, promote confidence, ease tensions and resolve disputes through negotiations and mediation at the regional and subregional and global levels, contributing to the larger goal of equal and undiminished security for all and a general reduction in all types of armaments.

Secondly, the notion of transparency was envisaged to be forward-looking, promote non-discriminatory approaches and tools, focus on high technology – which in today’s jargon would be called new and emerging technologies and sophisticated weapons – and cover aspects of weapons of mass destruction. Unfortunately, the approaches to matters related to this item have followed a digressive course. The central principles and rationale for the item have continued to be disregarded in the subjective interest of a few. Rather than elaborating universal and non-discriminatory means to increase openness and transparency, as originally called for in the resolution back in 1991, we continue to witness the complete opposite. Among the list of concerns, the level and scale of global military expenditures feature prominently.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, last year saw a 2.6 per cent increase in world military spending, while global gross domestic product shrank by over 4 per cent. Global and military spending as a share of gross domestic product saw the biggest year-on-year rise in well over a decade. Unsurprisingly, almost all credit goes to some of the big and powerful countries. Serious concerns also remain over the growing transfers of armaments and sophisticated weaponry, especially in volatile regions, which are inconsistent with the imperatives of maintaining peace, security and stability.

In the same vein, the application criteria for transferring arms remains shrouded in mystery. Policies of double standards persist, and South Asia has witnessed universal principles being brushed aside for strategic and commercial considerations. The widening gap between championing of global norms and actual arms transfer behaviour must be plugged.

Despite these glaring acts of omission and commission, there have been a few bright spots in the context of this item outside the Conference on Disarmament. While not without their own shortcomings, parts of the United Nations machinery such as the guidelines developed by the Disarmament Commission and the Register of Conventional Arms have contributed positively. However, unfortunately, the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to show a good scorecard.

And this brings me to my final point, that is, contextualizing our work on this item today in light of the original principles, our contemporary milieu and requirements. We know that new weapons systems, both strategic and conventional, continue to be improved, developed and deployed in several parts of the world. Among others, anti-ballistic missile systems, anti-satellite weapons and other sophisticated strategic systems continue to be introduced. Worrying trends such as the weaponization of outer space, cyberweapons and the production of sophisticated conventional weapons with destructive capacity equal to weapons of mass destruction are on the rise. The integration of artificial intelligence in weaponry has produced a unique and novel class of weapons in the form of lethal autonomous weapons systems, with their multifaceted concerns. The links of these disturbing trends with the continuing reliance on nuclear weapons and their further development have also been evidenced. These developments are dangerously destabilizing and carry serious implications for regional as well as global peace and security. They also point to the very areas that transparency and armaments must also focus on in the world of today.

Contrary to what some may have heard, it is evident that the original intent in bringing the item to this body was never to limit transparency discussions to the United Nations Register and its surrounding perennial disagreements alone. It was clearly to identify new means that are universal and non-discriminatory and that will lead to an end of the destabilizing accumulation of all arms – conventional, those with high technology and weapons of mass destruction.

Given these worrying developments and trends, it is time for this body to examine its own actions, revisit outdated approaches, recommit itself to the original tasks assigned to it under this agenda item, and pursue and evolve new means, tools and mechanisms to promote transparency in all forms of armaments and their means of delivery.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan for his statement and I now give the floor to the distinguished delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Mendoza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, on behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we warmly welcome the new ambassadors. We take this opportunity to join the distinguished delegation of Russia in expressing condolences to those countries that have recently been affected by natural disasters. We express our full support and solidarity with the people and the Government of Cuba in view of the ongoing campaigns aiming to discredit their Government and their political system.

Venezuela is firmly committed to the fight against all forms of terrorist acts, regardless of their motivation and objectives, and therefore strongly rejects all manifestations of terrorism, including State terrorism.

The systematic violations of the Charter of the United Nations are a threat to international peace and security. My country has also been the victim of attacks against several of its diplomatic missions and consulates, which runs counter to diplomacy and multilateralism. Venezuela is of the view that the fight against terrorism must be sincere, firm and transparent, based on the principle of mutual cooperation and in line with national legislation, international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Guided by the spirit of a new and innovative spirit of multilateralism, we must find equally new and innovative solutions to the challenges humanity is facing today. Inequality

and poverty and the threat of weapons of mass destruction, climate change and environmental destruction are pending issues.

The President: I thank the delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for her statement. Distinguished colleagues, we have now come to the end of our speakers' list. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. This therefore concludes our business for today.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.