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First Committee

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Jinga. (Romania)

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

Programme of work

The Chair: Before proceeding, I would like to consult the Committee on a very important matter. Yesterday I received a letter from the Permanent Representative of Cameroon forwarding draft resolution A/C.1/73/L.69, entitled “Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa”. The Ambassador informed me that the draft resolution was submitted beyond the deadline due to protracted consultations in the region, including in capitals.

Given the extraordinary circumstances for the late submission and the importance of the draft resolution in promoting the international disarmament agenda, may I take it that the Committee agrees to accept the draft resolution at this time, so that it is available for action during the action phase of the work of the Committee?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 93 to 108 (continued)

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

The Chair: The Committee was scheduled to hear a briefing today by His Excellency Mr. Jean-Claude Brunet, Ambassador-at-large of France on transnational criminal threats and the fight against

the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, in his capacity as President of the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. However, I have been informed that Ambassador Brunet is unable to join us today, due to a family emergency. He has asked His Excellency Mr. Yann Hwang, Ambassador of France to the Conference on Disarmament, to read out his briefing. I am sure that the entire Committee joins me in extending to Ambassador Brunet its deepest sympathy. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family during this difficult time.

Following the briefing by Ambassador Hwang, the Committee will change to an informal mode to afford delegations an opportunity to make comments, although questions will not be taken, as Ambassador Brunet is not here to answer them. Thereafter, the Committee will listen to the remaining 22 speakers under the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction” and then continue its discussion on the cluster “Outer space (disarmament aspects)”.

At noon, in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee yesterday (see A/C.1/73/PV.15), we will begin hearing statements under the cluster “Conventional weapons”, with priority being given to delegates that are not New York-based and, of course, to group statements.

I now warmly welcome and give the floor to Ambassador Hwang.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I want to apologize on behalf of Mr. Jean-Claude Brunet, who had to cancel his trip to New York yesterday evening for personal reasons. He has asked me to replace him, which I am pleased to do. I will therefore read on his behalf the briefing he prepared for our meeting this morning.

“France is pleased to present to the First Committee the report of the third Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held from 18 to 29 June.

“The Programme of Action, together with the International Tracing Instrument that complements it, are essential tools for conventional weapons control and international peace and security, at a time when more than 900 million small arms and light weapons are in circulation around the world and when such weapons kill 500,000 victims every year. Illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons violates international embargoes. Such weapons help to destabilize societies, perpetuate conflict, hinder development and fuel terrorism as well as the scourge of organized crime. France, like other States, has experienced that first hand in the form of the attacks perpetrated on its national territory in January and November 2015.

“Given the full extent of its responsibility, as soon as France was appointed to the presidency of the Conference on the Programme of Action, we made it a priority to mobilize the entire international community and relevant actors to work towards the success of the Review Conference. At the national level, that commitment formed part of a strategy to bolster the fight against conventional arms trafficking, which resulted in the launch of numerous cooperation measures, of which I will mention just one, the Franco-German coordination initiative in the Western Balkans.

“That commitment also reflected our country’s dedication to multilateralism as a lever of action for peace. As the Committee is aware, the Programme of Action is the only universal and consensus-based instrument that has the ability to define common avenues for responding to the global challenge posed by trafficking in small arms and

light weapons in all its dimensions. That is why my country set a range of ambitious priorities for the Review Conference.

“To achieve those goals, France has implemented a transparent, inclusive and robust preparatory process, evidenced by our organization of approximately 10 informal consultation sessions in New York and Geneva, as well as in capital cities. I participated in several thematic and regional seminars that were conducted by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, to which we would like to express our thanks and whose contribution in terms of expertise and experience was of great value. Two drafts for an outcome document were circulated well in advance — the first in January and the second on the eve of the Conference.

“We adopted a transparent approach and held constructive dialogues throughout the organization of the Conference. For the first time under the Programme of Action, all plenary meetings were open to civil society, which allowed for extremely broad participation by non-governmental organizations and industry. The mobilization of States was indeed remarkable, as 98 States spoke in the general debate, including seven on behalf of groups of States, which represents a significant increase compared to the previous Review Conference.

“However, we must acknowledge that discussions encountered two difficulties, which led to two votes during the last meeting, the first on the question of ammunition in the Programme of Action and the second on the reference to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“Nevertheless, the work of the Conference resulted in the adoption by consensus of a substantial 21-page outcome document (A/CONF./192/2018/RC/3, annex), which included a political declaration and two implementation plans concerning, respectively, the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, as well as a section dedicated to promoting adequate, effective and sustainable international cooperation and assistance. Finally, and very importantly, the Conference adopted a follow-up schedule for the period from 2018 to 2024.

“I would like to mention just a few substantive points to highlight the significant progress that

we believe was made, which largely reflect the priorities of the French presidency.

“The outcome document stresses the issue of combating the diversion of small arms and light weapons and effectively controlling them. It declares the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals to be frameworks for implementing the Programme of Action. It recognizes the gender dimension of small arms and light weapons-related violence, particularly with regard to domestic violence. It underlines the crucial importance of regional and international cooperation, especially to counter networks. It emphasizes the importance of assistance and capacity-building and provides a follow-up schedule for the next stages in the process, including the convening of biennial meetings, one of which will review the implementation of the objective of combating diversion.

“The schedule also welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish a multi-partner funding mechanism under the Peacebuilding Fund. Finally, it takes note of the possible challenges posed by new manufacturing technologies for small arms and light weapons, such as polymer weapons, modular weapons and so on. It also entrusts the Secretary-General with making recommendations on that matter.

“In conclusion, we believe that momentum in this area must be maintained and that we have good foundations for it. My country is fully committed to the effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, including throughout the intersessional process, which will begin shortly, particularly with a view to organizing the next biennial meeting in 2020.”

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador Hwang for his briefing.

In keeping with the established practice of the Committee, I will now suspend the meeting to afford delegations an opportunity to make informal comments or observations on the briefing we just heard.

The meeting was suspended at 10.20 a.m. and resumed at 10.25 a.m.

The Chair: The Committee will now hear the remaining speakers under the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction”.

Ms. Çalışkan (Turkey): The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems is a grave threat to international security. The risk of non-State actors acquiring such weapons is a matter of serious concern. As a result of being situated close to regions that pose a high risk of proliferation, we vigilantly monitor developments in that field and take part in collective efforts to devise measures to reverse that alarming trend. We consider arms-control and non-proliferation treaties important, along with export-control regimes as a means to prevent such proliferation.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances is a crime against humanity and a violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and Security Council resolutions. We condemn in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons that has re-emerged, with no accountability, decades after those important international documents entered into force. We deplore the fact that since 2012 those weapons have been used in Iraq, Malaysia, Syria and the United Kingdom. We cannot accept the possibility that using such substances can become the new normal.

We regret that the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism on chemical weapons use in Syria was not extended last year. It was a key mechanism for establishing facts, and its valuable and professional work had confirmed that the Syrian regime was responsible for four chemical-weapon attacks and Da’esh for two other attacks.

The firm and wide rejection of impunity for the use of chemical weapons led to the fourth special session of the Conference of the State Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, during which the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was called on to put in place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of chemical-weapon use in Syria. Turkey has strongly supported that initiative in The Hague. The implementation of that decision is also of crucial importance.

We expect the necessary arrangements to be put in place swiftly, in accordance with that decision. We also welcome the fact that pursuant to that decision, the OPCW secretariat will provide information to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of

Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. We note with appreciation the recent memorandum of understanding signed between the OPCW and the Mechanism to put that collaboration into effect.

We are concerned about the fact that the OPCW Fact-finding Mission has identified further uses of chemical weapons in Syria, whose perpetrators have still not been identified. We are also concerned about the remaining gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the declaration of the Syrian regime regarding its chemical-weapon programme and stockpiles. We urge the regime to fully cooperate with the OPCW, in accordance with its obligations pursuant to the CWC.

We hope that the Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention to be held next month will provide an opportunity to take stock of the current situation regarding the use of those weapons and strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

On a positive note, we welcome the completed destruction of Libya's remaining category 2 chemical weapons, as well as the completed destruction by Iraq of its entire declared stockpile of chemical-weapons remnants, as reported by the Director-General. On this occasion, we would like to join others in calling for the universalization of the Convention and invite the remaining States — the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Israel and South Sudan — to become party to it.

We would also like to reiterate our support for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, as the main framework for dealing with the use of such substances, and for the efforts to achieve its universalization. Although the outcome of the eighth Review Conference was not satisfactory, we are pleased that the meeting of States parties held last December resulted in a new programme of work during the intersessional period. In that context, we support the timely submission of voluntary confidence-building reports by all States parties to the Convention.

Mr. Verdier (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina is a party to all regimes on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, subscribes to The Hague Code of Conduct and actively participates in the Proliferation Security Initiative.

We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and advocate for the continued efforts to universalize it. The use of chemical weapons by any actor, in any place or under any circumstance is unacceptable and constitutes a flagrant violation of the international obligations under the Convention and international law, and all responsible for their use must be held to account. Moreover, Argentina calls on all States to strictly comply with their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Argentina participates in the National Authority Mentorship and Partnership Programme and, together with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), is organizing regional courses on assistance and protection in chemical emergencies and on safety management and chemical protection in laboratories. In addition, we are committed to the Convention's outreach efforts.

The latest incidents confirmed by the OPCW prove that events continue to occur in which chemical substances are identified as weapons. Such events have triggered debate about how to strengthen the OPCW. In that regard, we call on all States parties to make every effort to preserve the culture of consensus that enabled it to become the most successful of its kind in the field of international disarmament and earned it a Nobel Peace Prize. In view of its relevance, we believe that all initiatives should be adopted by consensus, in order to avoid sowing division in the OPCW.

The fourth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to be held in November, will provide an opportunity to advance that debate. Faced with the strong possibility of envisioning a world without chemical weapons, instead of concentrating our work on primarily destroying arsenals, we will have to look at how to prevent the resurgence of chemical threats.

In addition, greater efforts should be directed towards enhancing the Convention across all its pillars, especially with regard to activities that promote economic and technological development and the ability of States parties to develop and apply chemistry for purposes that are not prohibited by the Convention. The project for the future OPCW centre for chemistry and technology will be able to serve as a fundamental tool in that respect, helping to lead the way in global efforts to rid the world of chemical weapons.

Moreover, we are preparing ourselves to face worsening challenges, such as the threat of chemical terrorism. The OPCW must also make contributions in that area. In October 2017, the Executive Council adopted a landmark decision to address the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors. Last June, a special two-day conference was held on the fight against chemical terrorism, bringing together Government representatives, academics and industry representatives, who discussed the threat of the use of chemical weapons by terrorists and various approaches to preventing and responding to it.

Over the coming days, as in the past, we must once again seek to act while maintaining unity of purpose. It is in the interests of the entire international community for the OPCW to protect what it has achieved and, at the same time, for it to be resolutely strengthened so that it can continue to face current challenges and prepare for new forward-facing priorities. We must make every possible effort to avoid political division within the OPCW, as that would weaken it.

The international credibility and recognition of the OPCW rests on the excellence of its human resources, its adherence to rigorous procedures, the quality of its technical work and its delivery of proven results. Its driving force comes from the necessary understanding among States parties, which is demonstrated by their consensus in the decision-making of the Convention's governing bodies. Ensuring that understanding is our exclusive responsibility as States parties.

Argentina reaffirms the fundamental importance of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We renew our commitment to continuing to actively and constructively cooperate in advancing its objectives.

I will end on that note. The full version of our statement will be made available online.

Ms. Mansfield (Australia): Further violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention continue to test our resolve to defend that key international Treaty and norm of behaviour. Our collective challenge is to follow and enforce the rules that we have set ourselves, including by identifying those who violate the Convention.

In June, Australia was proud to contribute to an outcome that strengthened the hand of global non-proliferation. A special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention was called to confront the highly regrettable use

of chemical weapons in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia and the United Kingdom. In an overwhelming signal of support for the critical role that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) plays in countering chemical-weapon use, it was accorded a mandate to attribute responsibility for the use of such weapons in Syria and address universal attribution. Australia calls on all Member States to strongly support the OPCW's Director-General in establishing an attribution mechanism on Syria and developing a global attribution capacity. Creating such instruments sends a clear message — that users of chemical weapons will be held to account.

Australia is unapologetic in reasserting the importance of non-proliferation and of identifying and holding to account those who use chemical weapons. When the renewal of the mandate of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism was blocked, the international community explored other options, including through the French-led International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Next month, we will meet in The Hague to review the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention over the past five years — years that have been unlike any in recent history — and work to ensure the Convention's longer-term viability. The use of chemical weapons in Syria remains a dark legacy of shame for the Syrian regime and its backers and for certain non-State actors. We commend the ongoing work of the OPCW Fact-finding Mission and the declaration assessment team on Syria.

We also commend the OPCW's work, at the United Kingdom's request, in responding to the use of a new nerve agent in the United Kingdom. Such violations of international law must not be allowed to continue with impunity. It is in all our interests to do whatever we can to strengthen the global norm against any use of chemical weapons, by anyone, anywhere.

The Security Council should retain the authority to address international security concerns arising from any use of chemical weapons and to decide appropriate steps and consequences. However, it also makes sense that the States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention should be able to attribute responsibility for violations of the Convention, including to deter others who might consider using such reprehensible weapons with impunity.

We must continue to work collaboratively to adjust policies and regulations so that they reflect the constantly evolving threats and technologies in the field of weapons of mass destruction, including through robust export controls. The Australia Group, which we chair, brings together 43 participants committed to harmonizing export controls to prevent rogue States and terrorists from obtaining what they need to build chemical and biological weapons. Through the regular meetings of the Group, participating countries collaborate to curb the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. To succeed in that task, the Australia Group's members are working closely with non-members across many regions to share best practices and address how to strengthen our collective efforts in order to prevent the spread and use of those weapons.

The Biological Weapons Convention not only underpins the international norms against biological weapons but also facilitates global efforts to promote the peaceful uses of the life sciences. We remain committed to strengthening the Convention and welcomed the constructive discussions at the meeting of experts held in August. One action that should be taken immediately is resolving the serious financial situation, which has been exacerbated by the failure of some States parties to pay their annual contributions.

Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) remains central to Member States' efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to terrorists and non-State actors. We urge Member States to fulfil all their obligations under the resolution.

Ms. Vasharakorn (Thailand): Thailand aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, respectively (see A/C.1/73/PV.14).

The international norms against biological and chemical weapons were firmly established after a major global awakening. The world community witnessed the horrific humanitarian consequences of the use of those weapons in the First World War, and the international community responded collectively. However, despite those efforts, we find ourselves confronting the same humanitarian challenges today. The norms that we worked so hard to solidify are being tested in different places around the world. To ensure that we have disarmament that is capable of saving humankind and

that people are central to our disarmament efforts, we must safeguard those norms so that they continue to be upheld and respected.

With regard to chemical weapons, we must do more. Thailand reiterates once again that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances is unacceptable. Proven perpetrators must be held accountable. At the same time, the process of verification must be transparent, balanced and based on consent. The upcoming twenty-third session of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention's fourth Review Conference provide a fitting opportunity to deliberate on such matters. Thailand stands ready to work with all the relevant parties to achieve a successful consensus outcome.

Turning to biological weapons, Thailand welcomed the fruitful conclusion of the 2017 meeting of States parties of the Biological Weapons Convention, in which consensus was reached on moving the Convention's intersessional programme forward. By identifying the intersessional programme's priorities, the States parties to the Convention are now better equipped to help strengthen it as a whole. All of the intersessional programme's priorities are important, but the institutional strengthening of the Convention is particularly vital. We believe that realizing the Convention's goals requires a legally binding verification protocol.

We cannot allow weapons of mass destruction to fall into the wrong hands. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) continues to be a tool to help us. For Thailand, that means engaging our private sector in order to raise awareness on dual-use items and strategic trade control. We welcome further opportunities to cooperate with our regional and international friends and colleagues in that regard. There is a lot of work ahead, but it is critical to keep moving forward. Upholding norms against weapons of mass destruction and ensuring that they are respected is not up for debate. It is an obligation. We call on all Member States to join us, with constructive cooperation and a spirit of multilateralism in mind.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country, Syria, is a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and is committed to its obligations under the Convention. We therefore transferred all of our chemical materials to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

(OPCW) and ended our chemical programme, which the OPCW recognized. Syrian chemical materials were destroyed on a United States vessel in the Mediterranean. My Government therefore categorically denies the false allegations and accusations that the Syrian Arab Army has used toxic chemicals against Syrian civilians in any region of the country. Syria affirms that the Syrian Arab Army possesses no chemical weapons of any kind and has never used or intended to use such weapons, because it does not possess them. We advise sceptics to look for the real perpetrators of that crime elsewhere.

My Government condemns the crime of using chemical weapons in the strongest terms, because we believe in the quest to rid the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), with nuclear weapons at the top of the list. The Committee is aware that in 2003, during Syria's time as a member of the Security Council, we submitted a draft resolution on eliminating WMDs from the Middle East. It should also be aware that the fact of my country's joining the CWC proves to the entire world that it is committed to refraining from any use of chemical weapons. Despite its difficult circumstances, Syria is fulfilling its obligations under the Convention, as Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mission, confirmed in her report to the Security Council in June 2014. Through the destruction of its two final sites and the OPCW's verification that the debris had been removed from them, Syria has complied with all of its commitments to destroying all chemical-weapon production sites, and is now discussing a Syrian national declaration in coordination with the OPCW.

On 10 December 2012, my country warned the international community, in document A/67/628, of the danger posed by terrorist groups using chemical materials as weapons, especially after terrorist groups' seizure of a private facility east of Aleppo containing several tons of toxic chlorine. The Committee is aware that on 19 March 2013, terrorist groups in Khan Al-Assal committed a crime using chemical weapons for the first time in Syria, which resulted in 25 martyred victims and more than 110 civilians and military personnel injured. And yet so far that horrible crime has not been investigated, despite the fact that Mr. Åke Sellström, Head of the United Nations team to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, was assigned to do that.

My country is extremely concerned about the extortion and threats being used by the Group of Western States and particularly the United States, Britain and France, the members of the tripartite aggression against Syria, with the aim of getting a resolution adopted at the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC in order to politicize the OPCW and use it to carry out aggressions against independent and sovereign States under the pretext of using chemical weapons. Such behaviour constitutes a dangerous precedent in the international system by giving a technical and scientific organization the authority to conduct criminal and legal investigations outside its purview. The goal is clearly to identify the responsibility for cases of using chemical weapons by overriding the international body that safeguards international peace and security. The resolution is illegitimate, because it was adopted by less than half of the Convention's member States, besides granting the OPCW authority that the Convention does not provide for. It was specifically for that very good reason that on 23 October the OPCW Executive Council did not adopt a draft resolution on the programme budget for 2019 that included a specific item on funding the so-called mechanism for determining liability established by the resolution adopted by less than half of member States.

I will limit myself to those remarks. A full version of our statement will be uploaded to the PaperSmart portal.

Mr. Giacomelli da Silva (Brazil): Brazil reiterates its concerns about the continued allegations of the use of chemical weapons. The international community should not be defeated by challenges to the long-established norm that was first articulated in the 1899 Hague Convention and fully expressed with the adoption of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1992.

The CWC has unique standing in the disarmament realm. It is the sole Convention related to weapons of mass destruction and it is equipped with a verification mechanism and based on the equal rights and obligations of all States parties. We should therefore spare no effort to preserve the integrity of the CWC and the technical authority of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We also emphasize the central role of the Security Council in matters related to international peace and security, including its competence to assign responsibility for violations of the CWC. It is therefore regrettable that political differences within the OPCW have thwarted

further clarification of recent incidences of the use of chemical weapons and subsequent accountability for them. We also regret the high level of polarization and the sapping of the culture of consensus in OPCW's the policymaking bodies, especially the Executive Council.

Regarding the decision of the latest special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Brazil believes that changes to the Convention and the OPCW's working methods should have been decided in the OPCW Executive Council and in the context of the working groups set up for the upcoming CWC Review Conference in November. Despite our misgivings about the decision, Brazil will participate constructively in discussions on that issue at the next Review Conference. We believe, in particular, that the decision on the establishment of a special office for attribution will require further debate concerning the unit's mandate, structure and working methods.

My delegation reiterates that international cooperation constitutes one of the pillars on which the Biological Weapons Convention rests. We should point out that article X recognizes the right of all States parties to undertake activities in biological research for peaceful purposes and that activities in that area should be encouraged without prejudice to their economic, scientific and technological development. We highlight the importance of unimpeded access to reference materials and equipment for peaceful uses, especially for laboratory research, which are also crucial to strengthening preparedness for incidents involving biological agents. It is therefore essential to reinforce cooperation mechanisms under the Convention.

Brazil regrets that States parties to the Convention have so far remained unable to resume negotiations on a protocol to create a verification mechanism and an institutional framework along the lines of the OPCW for the implementation of the BWC. Meanwhile, Brazil is ready to consider alternative mechanisms to reinforce and ensure compliance with the Convention.

Mrs. Palacios Palacios (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/73/PV.14) and the statement to be delivered by the representative of France on behalf of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

If there is one word that characterizes the current global scenario and, by extension, the situation of the non-proliferation regime, it is uncertainty. Uncertainty

could jeopardize the body of norms that has taken more than 50 years to elaborate and has successfully contained horizontal and vertical proliferation. It could also turn technological and scientific advances, which are an inherently positive development, into hybrid threats that endanger security and stability. In that context, all members of the international community should remain committed to the common goal of a world free of weapons of mass destruction and offer pragmatic and realistic solutions that are based on trust and take into account the current global security situation.

It is very significant that the Secretary-General has outlined the main aspects of the non-proliferation regime in his Agenda for Disarmament. We congratulate him for that initiative and assure him of Spain's full support in seeking to promote it.

In recent years we have seen how chemical weapons, which we thought had been relegated to the history books, have been given a new lease of life in the most abhorrent way possible in the continuing attacks on the Syrian people and other episodes in the Middle East, South-East Asia and Europe. That tendency weakens the norms of prohibition that were born from the ashes of the First World War and enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Spain is among the vast majority of countries that do not believe in passivity or conformity as alternatives in the face of deteriorating prohibition norms. That is why we have been part of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons since its inception. And it is also why, given the lack of consensus in the Security Council surrounding the extension of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigation Mechanism, we are committed to creating a mechanism within the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The time has now come to put into practice, within the OPCW, the mandate that the States parties of the Organization bestowed on us at the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention last June. To that end, we ask for generosity and broad-mindedness from everyone here. Both the Convention and the organization itself, which have done so much for the international community, deserve our support and commitment.

The Biological Weapons Convention is also a fundamental pillar of the non-proliferation regime. Its

working operations and credibility suffered a heavy blow when its last Review Conference failed to agree on a programme of work. It is therefore particularly positive news that expert meetings were successfully held this summer, which is a promising sign for the next Review Conference. We cannot resign ourselves to accepting that differences of interpretation, however relevant they might seem, should prevent us indefinitely from obtaining a wide range of practical results that are necessary and very doable in order to strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

The current intersessional programme provides us with an excellent opportunity to seek a common denominator and achieve concrete measures, such as strengthening the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. It is also possible to move forward in other important areas, such as confidence-building measures, the consistent application of article III, on export controls, and the creation of codes of conduct for scientists and facilities.

Voluntary visits and other transparency exercises, such as those carried out by Spain with various Latin American countries, offer great potential for strengthening and implementing the Convention at the national level. Those exercises, which do not seek to replace a verification regime, make it possible to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of each party constructively and on an equal footing, particularly in terms of biosecurity and biocustody measures.

Traditional non-proliferation forums are increasingly coexisting with initiatives and platforms that respond to the specific needs of groups of countries or the international community as a whole. I will not dwell on those, but I think it is very positive that headway is being made on initiatives such as the Group of Seven's Non-Proliferation Directors' Group, and the relaunching of the Global Health Security Agenda. Interacting with international regimes on weapons control and dual-use technologies is also very important in combating illicit trafficking and preventing diversion.

A corollary of all those efforts is Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), the Committee of which Spain chaired in the 2015-2016 biennium. That is an instrument of enormous importance whose potential has not yet been fully explored. I want to reiterate my country's

commitment to that initiative and our full willingness to support and promote its future development.

Mr. Aung (Myanmar): Myanmar aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) and the Association of South-East Asian Nations, respectively (see A/C.1/73/PV.14).

Today's world is increasingly threatened by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The existence and proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery pose a threat to international peace and security, as well as to all humankind. We should work together and redouble our efforts to eliminate all types of weapons of mass destruction.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is the only comprehensive multilateral Treaty that bans an entire category of WMDs, provides for a verification system and promotes the use of chemicals for peaceful purposes. My delegation strongly supports the Secretary-General's commitment to restoring respect for the global norm against chemical weapons.

We all agree that chemical weapons still exist in today's arsenals. We are committed to the complete elimination of chemical-weapon stockpiles. In that regard, we are heartened by the announcement of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) that more than 96 per cent of declared chemical weapons have been destroyed under its verification. At the same time, we should not tolerate the use of such horrible weapons by any State or non-State actors.

Myanmar ratified the Convention in 2015 and has always adhered to its obligations under the Convention with a view to achieving effective progress towards the prohibition and elimination of all types of weapons of mass destruction. Twenty years after the Convention's entry into force, the OPCW has had a number of important achievements, including the Russian Federation's completion of its chemical demilitarization process and the destruction of Libya's remaining category 2 chemical weapons. We look forward to the successful outcome of the fourth Review Conference of the CWC, to be held next month, and its contribution to further strengthening the role of the OPCW.

Myanmar firmly believes that the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is an important part of

the international legal architecture related to WMDs. Myanmar ratified the BWC in 2014 and as a State party to the BWC strongly adheres to its obligations. We welcome the successful conclusion of the 2018 BWC meetings of experts, which were held in Geneva in August. We also recognize the progress achieved by the 2017 meeting of States parties, including agreement on an intersessional programme for 2018 to 2020, consisting of annual meetings of States parties and meetings of experts.

In addressing the danger of WMDs, the full and effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) can clearly contribute to making the world a safer place for all of us. It is imperative that all Member States refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to acquire or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery, in particular for terrorist purposes. We must all work together to prevent such WMDs from falling into the hands of terrorists. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for extending its assistance to Member States to fully implement the key requirements of resolution 1540 (2004).

We reaffirm the essential importance of preventing the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction. In line with NAM, we support the necessity of monitoring the situation and triggering international action, as required. Given the seriousness of the threat that weapons of mass destruction represent, we call on all Member States to adhere to their related international obligations with a view to achieving effective progress towards the prohibition and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

The Chair: I have just heard that former Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar of Peru has just passed away at the age of 98. May his soul rest in eternal peace. I propose that Committee members stand in a minute of silence.

The members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.

Mr. Incarnato (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/73/PV.14). I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Italy remains fully committed to effective multilateral action to combat the proliferation of

weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, which poses a growing threat to international peace and security. The existence of proliferation programmes and networks, difficulties in securing sensitive materials and the risks posed by terrorists gaining access to them and the establishment of effective export controls remain major challenges. In that regard, the universalization and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) remain essential.

Italy strongly supports the CWC and the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and reaffirms the importance of full compliance with the 1925 Geneva Protocol. The international community shares the responsibility of enforcing the prohibition of chemical weapons and upholding the international chemical non-proliferation regime, which is vital to international peace and security.

We are deeply concerned about the fact that chemical weapons have been repeatedly used in recent months. We reiterate our condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and at any time. However, condemnation is not enough. The international community must ensure accountability and continue to take a clear position against impunity for such heinous crimes. In that spirit, Italy actively participates in the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

We also welcome the June 2018 decision of the special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC, which has enhanced the capacity of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We stand ready to support the Secretariat and cooperate with all States parties in the implementation of that decision.

We reiterate our support for the work of the OPCW Fact-finding Mission to continue investigating allegations of the use of chemical weapons, and we urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to honour its obligations as a State party to the CWC and extend its full cooperation to the OPCW in order to resolve all outstanding issues relating to the implementation of the Convention.

Italy attaches great importance to the Biological Weapons Convention and recognizes the need to strengthen the international architecture for biological weapons. The BWC operates in a highly dynamic

scientific and technological environment, making it essential to endow the Convention with the appropriate tools to respond rapidly to emerging needs and challenges. A strong intersessional work programme is crucial to that end.

We regret that the delayed or missed payments of mandatory contributions by some States parties is putting at risk the operation of the Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit and possibly the convening of the 2018 Meeting of States parties. We look forward to discussing possible solutions in the next few weeks and call on all States parties to abide by their financial obligations, on time and in full.

Finally, Italy remains deeply concerned about the increasing risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors, particularly in relation to terrorist acts. In that respect, we support the strengthening of the 1540 Committee mechanism to increase national capacities in the implementation of non-proliferation measures and we welcome the positive outcome of the regime reviewing Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), as embodied in Security Council resolution 2325 (2016).

We reiterate our support for the universal and full implementation of all the relevant international instruments. In particular, we underline the importance of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its Amendment. We encourage all States to become party to those instruments and to comply fully with their provisions.

The Chair: The information about the passing of a former Secretary-General was transmitted through a WhatsApp group of United Nations Ambassadors. I have just been informed that the information I relayed to the Committee still has to be confirmed. I therefore regret any inconvenience created by that announcement and express my apologies to the delegation of Peru.

Mr. Kazi (Bangladesh): Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries under this thematic cluster (see A/C.1/73/PV.14).

Bangladesh remains committed to the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all

the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We reiterate our call for the universalization of the Convention and urge the four States that have yet to become party to it to do so as soon as possible. We call on all major possessor States to destroy their remaining stockpiles within a reasonable period of time and in a tangible and transparent manner. It is critical to ensure that as the destruction of declared chemical-weapon stockpiles is nearing completion, we maintain sustained vigilance and efforts to prevent their re-emergence and further proliferation.

We share the grave concerns about the reported use of chemical weapons in a number of instances, including in the protracted conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Bangladesh condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. We believe in principle that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable. It is worth considering the fact that there has been no specific mechanism under the Convention to make that possible. As the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has noted,

“Investigations of alleged use of chemical weapons are essential if we are to preserve the core norms of the Convention, its credibility and its integrity”.

Bangladesh believes that the Security Council can and should play an instrumental role in facilitating such an investigation and accountability. Against a backdrop of unwarranted divisiveness within the Council, it is likely that parallel processes and mechanisms will be created at the expense of a consensus-based approach. In that context, we take note of the decision adopted by the fourth special session of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention on addressing the threat of the use of chemical weapons.

We believe it will be important to hold constructive deliberations on the issue of the universal attribution of chemical-weapon attacks at the next regular session of the Conference of the States Parties. We stress the paramount importance of allowing the OPCW Technical Secretariat to deliver on its mandates and responsibilities with due diligence and in an impartial manner.

Bangladesh remains particularly alarmed by possible threats of chemical terrorism and urges States parties to the CWC to work collectively with the relevant international organizations in order to address the threats posed by the use of chemical weapons by

non-State actors. We look forward to seeing effective action in response to the recommendations on the possible implications of the latest developments in science and technology for the implementation of the Convention.

We reaffirm the commitment of the Bangladesh National Authority for the Chemical Weapons Convention to forge ahead with its sound working relations with the OPCW. The importance of demand-driven international cooperation for developing countries in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention cannot be overemphasized.

Bangladesh remains committed to fulfilling the provisions of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). We share the concern about the advances in biological science that could potentially undermine the established norms against the use of biological weapons. In that context, we have taken note of the alarm sounded by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs over the increasing likelihood of biological warfare and the unimaginable devastation and suffering it could bring to the human population.

We therefore take positive note of the efforts of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to establish small operational capacities to conduct effective and credible investigations into incidences of the alleged use of biological weapons. We also look forward to updates on the work of developing a framework to ensure a coordinated international response to the use of biological weapons.

We underscore the importance of the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of article X of the Convention through enhancing international cooperation and assistance. Bangladesh looks forward to informed deliberations on all related issues during the intersessional period prior to the next BWC Review Conference and acknowledges the need to address the critical funding shortfalls. However, we commend the State of Palestine and the Central African Republic on their accession to the Convention.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China stands firmly in support of the purposes and objectives of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and the continued enhancement of their universality, effectiveness and authority. We welcome the accession of Palestine and the Central African Republic to the BWC and the State of Palestine's accession to the CWC.

Last year, the Meeting of States Parties to the BWC adopted a programme of work for the intersessional period, paving the way for further promoting the BWC process over the next few years. Preventing the misuse and disuse of biological science and technology has a vital role to play in strengthening global biosecurity.

China has actively promoted a code of conduct for bioscientists within the framework of the BWC, on a voluntary basis, with a view to effectively tackling the challenges posed by advances in biotechnology. In June, a multinational seminar was held in China by the Chinese Government and the BWC Implementation Support Unit. In August, China submitted the updated draft of the code of conduct to the BWC meeting of experts, and we are ready to further discuss that issue with all parties to improve the draft. China believes that the biological non-proliferation export-control and international cooperation regimes could provide institutional safeguards for biological non-proliferation and international cooperation, which should be further discussed within the framework of the BWC.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to biosecurity. While enhancing its own biosecurity mechanism and capacity-building, China has actively engaged in international cooperation in that area. This month, the Wuhan Institute of Virology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences will hold a second international workshop on biosafety, laboratory management and experimental techniques in order to train researchers from developing countries in the prevention and control of infectious diseases and provide biosecurity public goods to the international community.

The fourth Review Conference of the CWC will be held in The Hague in November. China looks favourably upon the work of both the preparatory working group for the fourth Review Conference and the Open-ended Working Group on Future Priorities of the OPCW. We expect all parties to take the core provisions of the Convention into consideration, make full use of the fourth Review Conference, properly plan its future implementation and implement all of its provisions in a balanced manner in order to achieve the early realization of the purposes and objectives of the Convention.

China has always conscientiously and strictly fulfilled its obligations under the Convention and has submitted various accurate declarations to the OPCW in a timely manner. To date, China has received more

than 500 on-site inspections of all kinds. By making financial contributions to the OPCW and organizing training courses on assistance and protection for States parties in Asia, we have actively promoted relevant international cooperation and helped other States parties improve their implementation capacities.

China has always been resolutely opposed to the use of chemical weapons by any State, organization or individual, under any circumstances and for any purpose. We support a comprehensive, objective and impartial investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons that can draw conclusions that are able to stand the test of time and facts based on conclusive evidence, while holding the perpetrators and responsible parties accountable. At the same time, we maintain that it is important to make full use of the existing mechanisms of the Convention and strictly comply with its provisions when dealing with the alleged use of chemical weapons.

The results of the vote at the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention last June indicated that States parties were very divided on how to deal with attributions for the alleged use of chemical weapons. China would like to express its concern about the fact that such an important issue concerning the purpose and objectives of the Convention was dealt with by forcing a vote without extensive consultations. China urges States parties to meet each other halfway and properly bridge any gaps through consultations on an equal footing so as to avoid any negative effects on the future development of the Convention.

China welcomes the progress made in completely destroying chemical weapons and chemical-weapon residues in Russia, Libya and Iraq. It is regrettable that some States parties that possess chemical weapons or abandoned such weapons on the territories of other States parties have failed to complete their destruction within the time limit stipulated by the Convention. China believes that destroying chemical weapons in a timely manner, including the chemical weapons that Japan abandoned in China, has an impact on achieving the goal of a world free of chemical weapons and deserves the same attention as any alleged use of chemical weapons. China urges Japan to strictly implement the new destruction plan that was approved at the beginning of 2017 and to completely and safely destroy Japanese biological and chemical weapons as soon as possible by investing further resources. The destruction should be completed by 2022, as scheduled.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/73/PV.14). We also associate ourselves with the statement to be made by the representative of France on behalf of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. I would now like to make some remarks in a national capacity.

The use of chemical and biological weapons is repugnant to the human conscience. The complete ban on their production and use is a central pillar of international law, and the norm against their use has persisted for decades. Tragically, however, chemical weapons are still being used today. We condemn all use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere.

Most recently, and shockingly, they have been used in Douma by the Al-Assad regime and in Salisbury by Russia. Those appalling attacks constitute clear breaches of the Chemical Weapons Convention. They are an affront to the rules-based international system and the huge efforts made by the international community to consign those heinous weapons to history. The wave of expulsions of Russian officials following the attack in Salisbury in April this year demonstrates the degree of unity on this issue within the international community.

Identifying the perpetrators of chemical-weapon attacks is an important step in ensuring accountability and deterring future attacks. Russia has prevented action in the Security Council to investigate and hold to account those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The decision achieved at the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in The Hague in June was a clear sign of the international community's commitment to reinforcing norms against the use of chemical weapons. It is now time to take that work forward.

We are already supporting an increase to the regular budget of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and we pledged an additional £1 million to help the OPCW implement the June decision. We call on all States parties to pay their dues to ensure that this key institution is properly resourced. We should strengthen the capability of the organization tasked with protecting the Convention, and November's Conference of States Parties will be an important further step towards that goal.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is the cornerstone of the international ban on biological

weapons. We must ensure that the Convention remains effective and global in its reach. Efforts to secure universal adherence and full and effective implementation of the Convention by all States parties are critical. We call on the Secretary-General, the Chair of the 2018 meeting of States parties, the States parties themselves and the Implementation Support Unit to work together urgently to develop measures to secure sustainable funding and a healthy future for the BWC. It is essential that States in arrears pay their dues immediately.

The proliferation of ballistic missiles in tandem with the illicit development of weapons of mass destruction continues to pose a grave danger to regional and global peace and security. We reiterate the call to Iran in Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles that are designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic-missile technology.

We must all do more to ensure that resolution 2231 (2015) is rigorously enforced. We urge all partners to report any evidence that Iran is conducting activity contrary to resolution 2231 (2015) to the Security Council. The Missile Technology Control Regime and The Hague Code of Conduct are the two principal instruments in the field of ballistic-missile proliferation and the United Kingdom welcomes their important work.

Finally, I want to highlight Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the central role it plays in preventing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery and related materials from falling into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorists. The 2016 comprehensive review and the adoption of resolution 2325 (2016) represent the most significant revision to the work of 1540 in its 13-year history and a welcome example of Council consensus on non-proliferation issues. We must continue to promote its effective implementation if we are to tackle the threat posed by non-State actors, including terrorists.

Mr. Jaime Calderón (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): No reasoning can justify the use of weapons of mass destruction by any actor, under any circumstances. For El Salvador, it is clear that the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction must remain on the agenda and among our priorities. For that reason, it is increasingly relevant and necessary to continue

implementing all provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. In addition, my delegation would like to reiterate the significant value of both Conventions in promoting international peace and security.

Today the use of chemical weapons is universally believed to be contrary to international law and international humanitarian law, and public opinion condemns it. That would not have been possible without the exhaustive efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), with the support of the international community. Its tireless work brings us ever closer to the ideal of achieving a world free of chemical weapons.

While we welcome the significant advances made in destroying chemical weapons and their production facilities, we are aware that there is still much work to be done and recent activities indicate that the threat persists. We remain concerned about the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals against humankind, especially innocent civilians.

It is imperative that we ascertain who is to blame for the latest atrocities through thorough investigations that are independent of all political interference. It is essential that findings and conclusions be based on verifiable and objective information in order to ensure their credibility. In that regard, we believe that the OPCW should undertake an investigation to determine who is responsible for carrying out, organizing and sponsoring the latest activities regarding the alleged use of chemical weapons. El Salvador will keep abreast of those results.

El Salvador reaffirms its commitment to bolstering the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention with a view to preventing the threat posed by those weapons. We remain concerned about the threat posed by natural organisms as well as those that might be deliberately manufactured or manipulated to be used as weapons.

We therefore regret that the eighth Review Conference of the Convention was unable to reach consensus on a final document or an updated programme of work. However, we welcome the efforts made during the 2017 meeting of States parties to the Convention facilitating the adoption of an intersessional programme. We call on States members to mobilize the political will to enable the Convention to respond to current and future challenges through their work plans.

My country remains committed to working constructively to achieve a positive outcome for the Convention and its full implementation before the next Review Conference, to be held no later than 2021. We want to emphasize that, in addition to security considerations, the Biological Weapons Convention has other benefits that present many opportunities for States, for which it is important to highlight technical cooperation among parties. Greater coordination is therefore needed among States to foster international assistance. In that regard, we welcome initiatives such as exchanges in biological sciences and technology and the promotion of capacity-building in the fields of surveillance, detection and the diagnosis and containment of infectious diseases.

The universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention continues to be important to effectively eliminating all weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, we welcome the recent accessions of the State of Palestine and the Central African Republic to the Biological Weapons Convention, and we appeal to those who are not yet party to those Conventions to join them without delay.

Mr. Sivamohan (Malaysia): Malaysia associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (see A/C.1/73/PV.14).

The continued existence of weapons of mass destruction is a matter of great concern to the international community. The recent incidents involving the use of chemical weapons are deeply troubling and their perpetrators must be held accountable. In that regard, Malaysia underscores the imperative of upholding the principles of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC).

Malaysia reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to the full and effective implementation of that landmark instrument. The First Committee may rest assured that we will continue to work closely with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and other States parties in ensuring the fulfilment of obligations pursuant to the Convention.

As highlighted in our statement at the general debate of the Committee (see A/C.1/73/PV.6), judicial

proceedings concerning the use of the VX nerve agent at Kuala Lumpur International Airport in February 2017 will resume in the Malaysian High Court on 1 November, following the prosecution's establishment of a prima facie case against both the accused. All the relevant developments pertaining to the matter have been shared by the Malaysian Government with the Executive Council of the OPCW.

To realize the principal objectives of the CWC, Malaysia believes that all States parties concerned should take further measures towards the destruction of all declared chemical-weapon stockpiles, with monitoring of progress by the Executive Council of the OPCW and the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC.

It is imperative that all parties cooperate fully with the OPCW and enable it to effectively discharge its responsibilities vis-à-vis investigations of the alleged use of chemical weapons. While noting the decision to provide the OPCW with an attribution mandate, which was adopted during the special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention on 27 June, Malaysia reiterates the importance of protecting the OPCW from potential extraneous influences in the conduct of its work. It is essential to preserve the institutional integrity of that highly respected technical body, which has made immense contributions to the implementation of the CWC since its establishment more than two decades ago.

Malaysia firmly supports calls for universal adherence to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). In that connection, we believe that effective verification measures should be put in place to strengthen the BWC. Malaysia is currently pursuing requisite domestic processes for the adoption of a national biological weapons bill, pursuant to article IV of the Convention.

As far as possible, we will also participate in the exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the use of bacteriological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes, in line with article X of the Convention.

In line with the positions of our ASEAN partners, Malaysia will make every effort to ensure that South-East Asia remains a nuclear-weapon-free zone and one that is free of all other weapons of mass destruction,

as stipulated in the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. To that end, Malaysia will continue to support efforts undertaken through relevant ASEAN-led mechanisms, such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Mr. Lee Jang-Geun (Republic of Korea): For the past several decades, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) have been the core pillars of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime, together with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The two Conventions have underpinned our collective efforts to outlaw the development, production and stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons and associated substances. In the case of the CWC, the international community has made remarkable progress, destroying 96 per cent of all declared chemical weapons and achieving the near-universalization of its membership.

However, the threat of the use of chemical and biological weapons today is no less serious than the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. Our common goal of a world free of chemical weapons is still out of reach, as we are repeatedly witnessing the horrific use of chemical weapons across the world, including in Syria and the United Kingdom. Four countries still refuse to join the international efforts to outlaw those dangerous weapons.

In particular, it is deeply concerning that the issue of Syrian chemical weapons remains unaddressed even five years after Syria joined the CWC. My delegation notes with concern the recent report by the Declaration Assessment Team that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is still unable to resolve all of the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in Syria's initial declaration.

In that regard, we would like to add our voice in support of the work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission and urge the Syrian Government to render its full cooperation to OPCW mechanisms. We strongly condemn any use of chemical weapons, under any circumstances, by anyone. Those responsible for such heinous acts must be held accountable. In that regard, my delegation welcomes and supports the decision on the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons adopted at the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in June. The attribution mechanism to be introduced at the OPCW will serve to deter potential perpetrators

from using chemical weapons in the future and thereby contribute to the effective implementation of the CWC.

My delegation firmly believes that universalizing the Convention is a key element in ensuring global peace and security and should therefore be given top priority. We urge the four States that are still not party to the Convention to accede to it as soon as possible, without any preconditions.

Regarding the BWC, the Republic of Korea has been consistent in its support for reinforcing the BWC regime, based on each State party's robust implementation of the obligations under the Convention. Considering the rapid development of the life sciences today and their dual-use nature, my delegation believes that it is important to strike a careful balance between the substantial benefit of biological technologies and their proliferation risks. The nexus between emerging technologies and potential weaponization requires close examination in order to keep the BWC relevant and updated.

In that context, my delegation welcomes the successful conclusion of the 2017 meeting of States parties, particularly its agreement to establish an intersessional programme. It was all the more opportune and meaningful that the BWC meeting of experts last August held an in-depth discussion on the review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention.

My delegation also emphasizes that strengthened confidence-building measures among the States parties and sufficient capacity-building and assistance are essential prerequisites for ensuring the effectiveness and universal benefit of the Convention. Last year, as a concrete effort in that regard, my Government established the Global Disease Eradication Fund, designed to support capacity-building in developing countries to prevent, detect and respond to the outbreak of infectious disease. Furthermore, in collaboration with the World Health Organization and UNICEF, my Government is committed to reinforcing the capacity of relevant laboratories and workforces in developing countries.

I would like to conclude by briefly noting the importance of improving the financial stability of the BWC regime. We have to find a way to generate financial capacity for its operations as soon as possible.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is making vigorous efforts to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), which must be seen as a reliable tool for reducing the threat of the use of biological agents as weapons and contributing to the development of international cooperation in the biological arena for peaceful purposes.

Experts from member States of the BWC held a productive meeting in Geneva from 7 to 16 August, attended by representatives of more than 100 States who considered concrete proposals for improving the implementation of the Convention. There is hope that a consensus could emerge on some of them at the Convention's ninth Review Conference in 2021. That includes the forward-looking Russian initiative within the Convention's format for employing mobile medical and biological units for providing assistance and investigating in cases where biological weapons have been used and helping to fight infectious diseases of various origins. The Russian delegation presented a new working paper in August on developing it. The Russian Federation believes that all friends of the BWC should support the ongoing intersessional efforts in the framework of the Convention and work to bring delegations' positions closer together in order to accelerate the adoption and implementation of measures capable of reducing the threat of biological weapons. There is simply no real alternative to that process within the framework of an international agreement to which 182 States are party.

The BWC regime is currently dealing with additional problems related to the increase in foreign military medical and biological activities, including in the post-Soviet space. In that regard, we propose improving the Convention's format for confidence-building measures in order to increase transparency and foster trust in its compliance. As a matter of principle, we urge those concerned to refrain from militarizing health care. We hope that all right-thinking forces can rally around a constructive and cooperative programme of action for strengthening the BWC. Russia will do its utmost to contribute to that goal and cooperate with all interested parties.

The Russian Federation fully supports the existing international regime for the prohibition of chemical weapons. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is one of the most successful multilateral instruments in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. Russia

has been a conscientious and responsible party to the CWC in deeds as well as words, having been among the first countries to sign the Convention on 13 January 1993 and then proceeding to work to implement it immediately. We carried out the elimination of all our chemical-weapon stockpiles under strict international control, and that laborious process was completed ahead of schedule in September 2017. On 11 October 2017, the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its Technical Secretariat certified the complete destruction of chemical weapons in Russia. We call on other States possessors, and particularly the United States, to follow our example and work as hard as they can to complete the process of chemical demilitarization as soon as possible.

Today we are seeing the extreme politicization of chemical issues by certain countries. In particular, we consider the decision of the June special session of the Conference of States Parties to the CWC — granting the OPCW Technical Secretariat attributive functions, inappropriate for this type of bureaucratic body, for identifying those guilty of the use of chemical weapons — to be illegitimate. It exceeds the Conference's mandate and encroaches on the exclusive powers of the Security Council established under Chapters VI, VII, VIII and XII of the Charter of the United Nations. The implementation of the ideas it expresses would threaten not just the CWC itself but the entire international system for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In the circumstances we believe it is important to preserve the unity of the OPCW and the integrity of the CWC and not to allow the purposes of the Convention to be replaced or permit it to be reformulated to promote competing political interests. We hope that States pursuing independent policies in the international arena will seriously assess what has been going on with the OPCW and will oppose the implementation of decisions at the forthcoming CWC Review Conference.

Against that backdrop, we are concerned about the biased and non-transparent activity of the OPCW Fact-finding Mission in Syria on the use of chemical weapons there. Its reports are based on material and evidence obtained remotely, mainly from opposition groups. The investigations have been conducted with gross violations of the provisions of the CWC, such as a failure to visit the sites of the alleged incidents or

to observe the key principle of preserving the chain of custody of material evidence.

I am about to conclude and need just a few seconds more. We firmly condemn the unfounded accusations of the United Kingdom regarding the participation of Russian citizens in incidents involving toxic chemicals in the towns of Salisbury and Amesbury. The claims made by London that only Russia could possess the technical means, practical experience and motive to commit such acts are completely untrue and are in fact designed to mislead the international community.

The full version of this statement will be uploaded to the PaperSmart portal.

Mr. Penaranda (Philippines): The Philippines associates itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.14). I would like to highlight the following points on behalf of the Philippines.

We are committed to three instruments on weapons of mass destruction — the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. With regard to the BWC, the Philippines believes that States parties must endeavour to advance the work of strengthening the Convention's implementation at the national, regional and global levels. We support an intersessional process that includes focused discussions on concrete and practical proposals and measures on international cooperation and preparedness, response and assistance. We support efforts to foster greater synergies among the relevant international organizations, as biosecurity and biosafety are cross-cutting issues that require holistic and coordinated responses. We recognize that the comprehensive implementation of the Convention can contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and is in keeping with the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, which considers disarmament and development to be strongly linked.

The Philippines is part of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction and is actively engaged in promoting the biosecurity agenda in the Asia-Pacific region. We recognize the excellent work of the BWC's Implementation Support Unit, but we must ensure

its financial sustainability. It is important that all States settle their assessed contributions, which are essential to strengthening the BWC regime. We also emphasize the value of the sponsorship programme in facilitating the participation of capital-based experts in BWC meetings.

On the CWC, my delegation reaffirms the commitment of the Philippines to the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention. We condemn in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances. It is unacceptable and a violation of international law.

The Philippines is committed to the implementation of the Convention and the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and is currently up to date with its obligations. The Philippines continues to work actively to enact domestic laws to implement the CWC. Representatives from my country participated in the stakeholders' forum for States parties in Asia on the adoption of national implementation legislation. The Philippines also continues to build its capacity to respond to any chemical attack by establishing additional chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear units, training personnel and providing the necessary equipment.

The Philippine national authority continues to collaborate actively with other Government agencies, academia and the chemical industry. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of capacity-building programmes, particularly in cooperation with the OPCW, which will enable it to develop a state of readiness that will enable it to take action promptly and provide the required assistance when faced with the threat of use or the actual use of chemical weapons.

My country continues to host in Manila the European Union Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative in South-East Asia, which demonstrates our seriousness about fortifying our defences against possible terrorist attacks, in South-East Asia generally as well as the Philippines. At the national level, we are implementing a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear national action plan with a unified approach to building our capacity to prevent, prepare and respond to the risks associated with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials.

In conclusion, I want to underscore the Philippines' serious concern about the existence and proliferation of other weapons of mass destruction, particularly biological and chemical weapons, and their means of delivery, as a threat to international peace and security. The Philippines calls on Member States that have yet to sign or ratify the BWC and the CWC to do so without delay, as universality is crucial to the success of those Conventions.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/73/PV.14).

The use of chemical and biological weapons is not only a serious security threat, it also has devastating humanitarian consequences for the civilian population, owing to such weapons' indiscriminate nature and potential for causing horrific forms of suffering.

Iran experienced the tragic effects of the use of chemical weapons in the 1980s, when Saddam's regime, with the material and intelligence support of the United States, attacked Iranian civilians and troops in 400 incidents that led to the death and injury of more than 100,000 Iranians. Many of the survivors continue to suffer from the lifelong effects of chemical-warfare agents. The memory of the victims of those horrific chemical attacks inspired the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), whose implementation has led to almost 96 per cent of all declared chemical-weapon stockpiles being destroyed. It is vital to maintain that success story by addressing the CWC's challenges.

The United States is the only possessor State party that has not yet completed the destruction of its chemical-weapon stockpile, while it has all of the necessary financial and technical capacities to do so. It should take every necessary step to comply with its obligations under the Convention without delay. The total and verifiable destruction of all chemical-weapons stockpiles should remain our key objective, as it is vital to building confidence in the Convention and reinforcing trust among States parties.

The reports of the use of chemical weapons, in particular by terrorist groups in Syria, are very worrying. It is evident that they could not procure toxic chemical agents or produce and use chemical weapons without external assistance and support.

That situation is very similar to the way in which Saddam's army acquired and used chemical weapons in the 1980s. There is substantial evidence that many European and American companies provided Saddam with the equipment, materials and technology required to develop its chemical-weapon programme. It is known that chemical precursors for chemical weapons and tubes for missiles and biological agents, including anthrax samples, were sent to Saddam by American suppliers. Given that all those companies needed to obtain export licences from their Governments, they could not have transferred chemical-weapon precursors to Saddam without their Governments' blessing.

In order to uphold the global norms against chemical weapons, it is essential for the international community to remain united in condemning their use and preserving the Convention's integrity and credibility, as well as the effectiveness, objectivity and impartiality of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) through a consensus-based approach. As a key supporter of the CWC and OPCW, Iran stands ready to cooperate on that basis and rejects any decision that undermines the CWC or the OPCW's role, as stipulated in the Convention.

Coalition-based approaches and initiatives will not contribute to strengthening the norm against the use of chemical weapons or the OPCW. That also applies to the unlawful missile attacks against Syria by the United States and its partners. Our success in permanently eradicating chemical weapons around the world is dependent on the CWC's universality. The remaining non-parties, in particular the Israeli regime, which possesses a large stockpile of chemical weapons, must therefore join the Convention.

The challenges of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) cannot be effectively addressed through an intersessional process. We firmly believe that the most effective approach to strengthening the Convention is through a resumption of negotiations on a legally binding protocol for the Convention. We call on the United States to withdraw its objection to the resumption of such negotiations. The continued non-adherence of the Israeli regime to the BWC is a major obstacle to its universality and also endangers the security of BWC States parties in the Middle East. That is another example of the behaviour of a regime that has no respect for international norms.

The Chair: We are approaching noon, but I still have four more speakers on my list under the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction”. We will therefore continue in order to exhaust the list of speakers under this cluster and then hear statements on the cluster originally scheduled for today from noon till 1 p.m., in accordance with yesterday’s decision (see A/C.1/73/PV.15).

Ms. Plepytė (Lithuania): Lithuania aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (EU) (see A/C.1/73/PV.14) and the joint statement to be delivered by the representative of France on behalf of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

It is truly appalling that 90 years after the entry into force of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and 25 years after the signature of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), we are witnessing numerous instances of the confirmed use of chemical weapons. In addition, in recent years there has been an increase in the incidence of those heinous crimes. While most of them were committed in conflict-torn Syria and Iraq, targeted attacks with the use of nerve agents were also committed in peacetime in the United Kingdom and Malaysia.

Lithuania condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons by State or non-State actors anywhere in the world. The international community must take responsibility and consolidate all its efforts to strengthen institutional capabilities in order to ensure the full implementation of the CWC. All alleged attacks must be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators held accountable. We fully share the assessment of the authorities of the United Kingdom that it is highly likely that Russia is responsible for nerve-agent use in the Salisbury attack and that there is no other plausible explanation.

It is deeply regrettable that the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), which was established to examine and attribute all cases of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, was blocked by several Russian vetoes at the Security Council last year. Prior to its closure, the JIM concluded that both Syrian Government forces and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant were responsible for the use of chemical weapons.

The experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) who are implementing the investigation into alleged chemical-weapon attacks

and verifying other aspects of the implementation of the CWC must have unhindered access to the sites of attacks and other objects related to their work. All countries must fully cooperate with the OPCW in good faith to enable it to successfully conclude its investigations. Any attempts to discredit or undermine the work or authority of the OPCW or its experts, including through cyberattacks, are unacceptable.

In that regard, we welcome the decision of the special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC, adopted on 27 June, to enhance the capacity of OPCW experts to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons. We are also looking forward to further steps in that regard during the upcoming session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC and the fourth Review Conference, to be held later this year.

On 15 October, EU Foreign Ministers adopted a new regime of restrictive measures to address the use and proliferation of chemical weapons, and we look forward to its practical implementation. We are also grateful to the Polish delegation for submitting draft resolution A/C.1/73/L.20, on the implementation of the CWC, and for its tireless efforts to achieve a well-balanced outcome.

Lithuania is an active member of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. All countries must stand united against any attempts to use chemical weapons or to assist those accused of responsibility for their use. Our common efforts must be taken to hold accountable anyone responsible for those heinous acts.

Ms. Tichy-Fisslberger (Austria): Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (EU) (see A/C.1/73/PV.14).

Austria condemns in the strongest terms any use of weapons of mass destruction. In recent years, an appalling re-emergence of chemical weapons has been documented. The repeated use of chemical weapons seen in Syria and Malaysia, as well as in the territory of an EU member State, the United Kingdom, is not acceptable and should be condemned in the strongest terms.

We are committed to getting rid of chemical weapons. As one of three treaties prohibiting weapons of mass destruction, the Chemical Weapons Convention is a key component of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. The recent violations of

the non-proliferation and disarmament commitments undertaken under the Chemical Weapons Convention are of the utmost concern.

There cannot be impunity for the use of such abhorrent weapons, and action must be taken. Austria therefore supported the decision in June of the Conference of States Parties of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to establish an attribution mechanism. It is essential to ensure that the OPCW, using fact-based evidence, is also able to determine who is responsible for the use of chemical weapons, especially as the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigation Mechanism could not continue its work.

Based on its commitment to the rule of law, Austria has joined the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. Like the European Union's sanctions regime against the use of chemical weapons, the Partnership is directed against those who commit such awful crimes, and their perpetrators must be brought to justice.

The 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention was the first treaty to ban an entire category of weapons. The establishment of the meeting of experts was an important step in contributing to the effectiveness of the Convention and we look forward to continuing that expert-level work in the coming years.

Austria is concerned about the development and modernization of delivery systems related to weapons of mass destruction, particularly the pursuit by several countries of concern of ballistic-missiles programmes. As those advances are an important element in global efforts to outlaw weapons of mass destruction, those programmes should be carefully addressed at both the bilateral and multilateral levels. The Hague Code of Conduct serves as an important multilateral transparency and confidence-building instrument in that regard. We encourage all States to join the Code and support that politically binding measure. Austria will continue to act as the Secretariat of that vital mechanism.

The only guarantee of non-use is the elimination of all classes of weapons of mass destruction. The disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, biological or chemical, has therefore always been a priority for Austria. The full destruction of declared chemical-weapon stockpiles, which is expected to be completed in the next few years, will serve as a milestone. We must continue on that path.

Ms. Claringbould (Netherlands): In addition to the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (EU) (see A/C.1/73/PV.14), the Netherlands would like to make the following remarks in its national capacity. We also align ourselves with the joint statement to be delivered by France on behalf of the participating States of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Multilateral institutions play a major role with regard to international security. My country has always championed, and will continue to champion, the rules-based international order, including effective multilateralism. The latter requires active cooperation from all of us.

In April, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague was targeted by a hostile cyberoperation. I would like to refer to the statement made on 4 October by the Presidents of the European Commission and European Council and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs of the EU. They expressed serious concern about the recent hostile cyberoperation that attempted to undermine the integrity of the OPCW, a respected international organization, hosted by the Netherlands.

“That aggressive act demonstrated contempt for the solemn purpose of the OPCW, which works to eradicate chemical weapons worldwide under a United Nations mandate. The EU deplores such actions, which undermine international law and international institutions. The EU will continue to strengthen the resilience of its institutions and those of its member States and international partners and organizations in the digital domain.”

Last year, the Security Council did not reach agreement on the extension of the mandate of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, thereby virtually creating a state of impunity for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We welcome and fully support the decision of the special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) last June to expand the mandate of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to determine who was responsible for the use of those weapons.

We also welcome the decision to grant the OPCW Director-General the authority to share information with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution

of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. That decision marks an important step towards accountability and justice.

The Netherlands has emphasized on many previous occasions that there is still critical work to be done regarding the initial declaration of Syria. For the most part, that work is the responsibility of Syria. That need is now even more urgent as numerous incidents of attacks using chemical weapons have been reported in recent years. Four attacks have been positively attributed to the Syrian regime, meaning that the regime is still withholding and concealing chemical weapons. Such behaviour is outrageous and should be remedied without delay. The Netherlands is working within the EU to strengthen sanctions against Syria to curb the criminal behaviour of the Syrian regime.

The Netherlands stands in support of the United Kingdom and reiterates its strong condemnation of the attack in Salisbury on 4 March. We agree with the assessment of the United Kingdom that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible and that there is no other plausible alternative.

The Netherlands is sponsoring, together with Canada, a proposal by the United States to include on the CWC schedule 1 list the type of chemical-warfare agent used in Salisbury and another closely related type. The OPCW Scientific Advisory Board clearly outlined the extreme risks of that type of chemical-warfare agent last July. Moreover, it has no known use for purposes not prohibited by the CWC. We are therefore convinced that urgent action needs to be taken to list those chemicals. Lastly, we call on the four States that remain outside the Convention to accede to it without delay.

The first round of meetings of experts of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) was held in August. We welcome the discussions that occurred and hope that the issues that are broadly supported will be further elaborated and will ultimately be used to implement the Convention.

The Netherlands is seriously concerned about the grave financial situation of the Convention, which puts at risk the proper holding of the December meeting of States parties and the continued functioning of the Implementation Support Unit. We urge States parties in arrears to pay the outstanding amounts in full and as soon as possible. We call on the Secretary-General, the Chair of the 2018 meeting of States parties, the

States parties and the Implementation Support Unit to expedite their collective efforts to develop measures for ensuring the financial sustainability and institutional viability of the BWC. We need a lasting solution. Our Convention is at stake. The CWC and the BWC are two indispensable instruments in our collective pursuit for a safer world.

Mr. Hwang (France) (*spoke in French*): I am taking the floor on behalf of 38 countries and the European Union, members of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Copies of the full version of this statement are available in this room and online.

We, the 39 States and the organization that are participants in the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, stand together to preserve the international standards and norms against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. We are determined to combat the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons and prevent impunity for those who resort to the use of such weapons or contribute to their development. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the repeated use of those weapons in recent months and years.

Our Partnership was founded on 23 January to strengthen our cooperation, protect the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), help to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons as a step towards bringing them to justice and support the work of dedicated bodies of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations in this area. We welcome the growing membership of the Partnership and urge the countries that share our views but are not yet members to join us. We recall the ministerial declarations adopted by the Partnership in Paris on 23 January and 18 May.

In May, the members of the Partnership supported the call to convene a special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC and consider ways to strengthen its implementation, including by exploring options for attributing responsibility for chemical-weapon use. We warmly welcome the decision adopted by the recent special session of the Conference of the States Parties, which condemned in the strongest terms the fact that chemical weapons have been used in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Malaysia and the United Kingdom by State and non-State actors

since 2012. That decision addresses direct threats to the object and purpose of the Convention.

We welcome the provisions of the decision for considering options to provide further assistance to States parties so as to enable them to implement their obligations under the Convention. Those options include enhancing chemical security and enabling international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes that are not prohibited under the Convention, as well as proposals to enhance the OPCW's capacity and tools to strengthen the implementation of the Convention's verification regime. The participating States of the Partnership will participate in expert-level meetings to be held in Paris on 8 and 9 November to develop a common approach that supports the implementation of the decision.

We reiterate our strong support for the CWC, which is an essential pillar of the international disarmament and counter-proliferation architecture and the rules-based international order on which we all rely. We affirm our unequivocal support for the work of the OPCW and commend the work conducted by its Declaration Assessment Team and its Fact-finding Mission in Syria. We note with concern the findings of the Mission on the use of chemical weapons in Al-Lataminah in March 2017 and in Saraqeb in February, as well as the interim report on their alleged use in Douma in April.

We believe that it is highly likely that the Syrian armed forces are responsible for that attack, taking into account their previous use of chemical weapons, among other things. We note that the Fact-finding Mission's interim report found evidence of chlorine use, and we await its final report on the attack. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to honour its obligations as a State party to the Convention, fully cooperate with the OPCW and fully disclose its chemical-weapon programme.

We condemn the use of a nerve agent in Salisbury on 4 March and the indirect exposure in Amesbury on 30 June in the United Kingdom. We deplore the use of that military-grade nerve agent and commend the United Kingdom for its transparency and the progress made in its investigation, which we hope will soon lead to the prosecution of the perpetrators of those abhorrent acts. We share the United Kingdom's analysis that it is highly likely that Russia was responsible for the attack and that there is no plausible alternative explanation.

We condemn the use of fake news and other such tools and campaigns designed to deliberately spread

misinformation about the use of chemical weapons and to avoid attribution and accountability. We also condemn the attempted cyberattack on the headquarters of the OPCW that was halted by the Dutch authorities in April, and we are very concerned about that attempt to undermine the OPCW's integrity.

We welcome the European Union's adoption on 15 October of a new autonomous regime of restrictive measures dedicated to fighting the proliferation and use of chemical weapons and their precursors. We hope for early progress on the listing of relevant individuals and entities.

In conclusion, we call for the expansion of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons and invite all Member States to join it so as to send a clear message on our common refusal to accept impunity for anyone responsible for the use of chemical weapons, wherever they may be, and on our commitment to putting an end to their use.

The Chair: We have heard the last speaker in the cluster on other weapons of mass destruction.

In accordance with the decision taken yesterday (see A/C.1/73/PV.15), the Committee will now take up the cluster "Conventional weapons".

Ms. Krisnamurthi (Indonesia): I am very pleased to be speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

NAM continues to reaffirm the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and relevant parts, components and ammunition for their self-defence and security needs. NAM is concerned about unilateral coercive measures in this area and emphasizes that no undue restrictions should be placed on the transfer of such arms. However, NAM remains deeply concerned about the wide range of security, humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences that arise from the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons. We call on all States, particularly major producer States, to ensure that they limit supplies of small arms and light weapons exclusively to Governments or entities duly authorized by them. We also underline the importance of the balanced, full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument to Enable States

to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, and in that regard we stress the urgent need to intensify efforts to promote international cooperation and assistance.

Recognizing the adverse humanitarian impact of the use of cluster munitions and in solidarity with countries affected by cluster munitions, NAM calls for the provision of the necessary financial, technical and humanitarian assistance to clearance operations for unexploded cluster munitions and the social and economic rehabilitation of victims, as well as for ensuring that the countries affected have full access to the material, equipment, technology and financial resources needed for clearing unexploded cluster munitions.

NAM continues to deplore the use of anti-personnel mines in conflict situations designed to maim, kill and terrorize innocent civilians, in contravention of international humanitarian law. We call on all States in a position to do so to provide the necessary financial, technical and humanitarian assistance for landmine-clearance operations and the social and economic rehabilitation of victims, as well as to ensure the full access of affected countries to the material, equipment, technology and financial resources they need for mine clearance. NAM States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction reiterate their commitment to the full implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan.

The Movement notes that the Arms Trade Treaty, which aims to regulate the trade in conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, entered into force on 24 December 2014. NAM calls for its balanced, transparent and objective implementation by its States parties, in strict accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the inherent right of every State to security and individual or collective self-defence. The Movement also underscores that the Treaty's implementation should in no way affect the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and their parts and components for their self-defence and security needs.

NAM States parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects

(CCW) and its Protocols encourage other States to become party to the Convention and its Protocols. NAM is of the view that lethal autonomous weapon systems raise a number of ethical, legal, moral, technical and international peace and security-related questions, which should be thoroughly deliberated and examined in the context of compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. NAM States parties to the CCW support the establishment of an open-ended group of governmental experts related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention.

NAM recognizes the significant imbalance in the production, possession and trading of conventional weapons between industrialized and non-aligned countries, and calls for a significant reduction in the production, possession and trading of conventional weapons by industrialized States, with a view to enhancing international and regional peace and security. We stress the importance of working to ensure that major arms-producing countries reduce their military expenditures, in accordance with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments, and urge those countries to devote those resources to global, economic and social development, especially the fight against poverty.

The Chair: I now call on those delegations wishing to speak in the right of reply on the cluster "Other weapons of mass destruction".

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to provide some clarification on various statements that have been made here over the past few days.

The Russian Federation firmly denies all accusations that it participated in the March 2018 poisoning of the Russian citizens Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, in the United Kingdom. The Russian Federation has never developed, produced or stockpiled the chemical substance that has been given the name Novichok in Western countries. During the discussion of the countries that might have produced the poisonous substances that were used against the Skripals, it emerged that more than 20 States, most of them NATO countries, and including the United Kingdom, either possessed the necessary technology or had produced similar substances for research purposes.

Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the types of nerve agents found in Amesbury and Salisbury and labelled as Novichok in the West are not on the control lists of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

When the United Kingdom approached the OPCW for what it claimed was technical assistance, it was merely an attempt to strengthen its unfounded accusations against Russia by exploiting the credibility of this organization and at the same time to divert the entirely justified suspicion that such types of chemical substances had been developed in Britain's Ministry of Defence laboratories at Porton Down.

We have frequently pointed out how important it is to carefully assess all of the issues related to producing new types of nerve agents, which have been well known since the beginning of the 1990s. In May 2018, Russia officially submitted to the OPCW Technical Secretariat a 300-page document listing approximately 1,000 new compounds of toxic substances that it would make sense to consider with a view to making changes to the OPCW lists.

Since the United Kingdom authorities began investigating the incident in Salisbury, it has presented no substantive proof of any kind that Russia participated in the poisoning of the Skripals. All of the so-called evidence is based on speculation and conjecture and can be reduced to the phrase "highly likely", which no legal system has ever accepted as sufficient evidence for an accusation. It is extremely unlikely that the Government of any European country would accept an accusation based on such wobbly, not to say useless evidence, and we see no reason why Russia should do so. The phrase "highly likely" is clearly being used for exclusively political purposes, because it is in fact impossible for the United Kingdom's Government to produce any concrete proof. We are puzzled by the position of countries that parrot the British line and affirm their total trust in the facts that the United Kingdom has published regarding the Skripal affair. What they are really doing is signing on to the use of tools for investigating cases of the use of chemical weapons such as manipulation, juggling the facts, false interpretation of the facts, refusing to use standard and time-trusted procedures and ignoring eyewitness testimony.

Where have we seen such behaviour before, and quite recently? It is all typical of the investigations of

cases of the use of chemical substances and weapons in Syria, the whole sham playbook that has been exploited for investigating incidents in Khan Shaykhun, Douma and other Syrian towns. Those tools, together with the "highly likely" approach, not only do not help the conduct of an objective, multilateral investigation of such incidents, they enable the perpetrators to escape punishment. If any European or other States want to practice such methods, that is their business, but we refuse to introduce them into international affairs.

Russia condemns the use of any chemical weapon or any chemical substance as a weapon by anyone, and we call for the perpetrators of such inhumane crimes to be punished. However, we are against making indiscriminate, unproven accusations against anyone for such acts. Russia will continue to support the conduct of an objective, unbiased, comprehensive investigation of any chemical-weapon-related incident, in accordance with all conventions banning chemical weapons. What the British have done with regard to the Salisbury incident runs counter not only to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) but also to London's international obligations in the areas of consulate rights, legal assistance in combating crime and respect for human rights. Russia is still willing to hold bilateral consultations with the United Kingdom on the basis of the appropriate CWC provisions, the existing Consular Convention of December 1965 between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom, and the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters of 20 April 1959. However, we must also emphasize that for more than six months the Russian Federation has been genuinely trying to convince United Kingdom authorities to agree to cooperate with it and participate in an investigation of the Skripal case.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My Government categorically denies the false allegations and accusations that some States have made in this meeting about the Syrian army's use of toxic chemical substances against Syrian civilians in parts of Syria. We once again affirm that our army does not possess any chemical weapons, has never used such weapons before and never will use them, because it has never possessed any.

The United States, Britain and France are playing a worldwide subversive role by sponsoring and supporting armed terrorist groups in Syria, providing them with chemical toxins and helping them to transport, store and

mix these toxins to use them against Syrian civilians, while accusing the Syrian Government of doing those things. Some delegations are still citing the distorted reports of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, which did not do its work professionally or objectively or stick to its mandate. As we have already pointed out, the Mechanism was simply an intelligence-service tool from its inception, controlled by the States that are sponsoring terrorism in Syria. We assert once again that if the Mechanism had done its job with integrity, it would have continued to function.

As the Committee is aware, my country is extremely concerned about the provocations and threats used by the Group of Western States, especially the United States, Britain and France, the States that have been conducting a trilateral aggression against Syria. They used the tactic of pushing through a decision at the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) that enabled them to politicize the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and use it as a tool for initiating acts of aggression against States on the pretext that chemical weapons had been used. That decision runs counter to provisions of the CWC and sets a bad international precedent by giving a technical and scientific organization the power to conduct legal and criminal investigations that are not within its remit. The decision, which addresses the issue of responsibility for incidents of chemical-weapon use, in clear violation of the mandates of the international organs whose job is to address issues relating to international peace and security, is not fully legitimate, because it was adopted by less than half of member States.

As I pointed out in my previous statement, the OPCW Executive Council therefore did not adopt the draft decision on the 2019 programme budget, which included a special item on financing the so-called Mechanism for determining liability established by the resolution. My country believes that the decision will only further complicate the ability of the OPCW to play its role, paralysing it and increasing the divisions among its members, while pushing it towards further polarization. That means that the decision cannot be implemented in practice.

As usual, in a desperate attempt to cover up the Turkish regime's violation of legitimate resolutions, today, in a hypocritical statement riddled with lies, the representative of the Turkish regime tried to point the

finger at other States. The Turkish regime has violated all of its international obligations on non-proliferation, weapons of mass destruction and combating terrorism. It is spreading nuclear weapons across its territories, in blatant violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It is violating the CWC and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) by providing toxic chemicals to Da'esh and Jabhat Al-Nusra, as well as other affiliated organizations. Moreover, the Turkish regime allows those terrorists to use Turkish territories to conduct chemical tests, while also participating, alongside other intelligence services and chemical experts from certain countries, in training terrorists to process and use toxic chemicals. The Turkish regime has used its territories to oversee the transportation and smuggling of most of the toxic chemicals reaching Syria and to deliver them to the terrorists.

We have previously called on the OPCW and the Security Council to put pressure on the Turkish regime to reveal the results of the investigations that we requested regarding the sarin that was seized on Turkish territories in the possession of terrorists. Our questions have focused on the reasons why the Turkish regime chose to release those terrorists, and we would like to know what has become of the sarin.

The Dutch regime has long been implicated in transporting toxic chemicals to the Israeli entity and other States. We want to know why the Netherlands has so far failed to notify the OPCW of the types of chemicals that it has delivered to Israel and other States, a process that would reveal the nature of those military-chemical programmes. Some time ago, certain mass media outlets in the Netherlands published information about the involvement of the Dutch regime in providing logistical support and funds to a number of armed terrorist groups in Syria, despite the fact that the Dutch Government had classified some of those groups as terrorist entities affiliated with Salafi jihadists. We ask the representative of the Netherlands if this act of the Dutch Government does not constitute a breach of its responsibilities, given that the Netherlands is a member of the Security Council, which is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In early April, the British regime began to put pressure on the terrorist White Helmets, which, as the First Committee is aware, were established by a British intelligence officer. The British regime put particular pressure on them on 2, 3 and 4 April to stage a chemical attack in order to create a pretext for the trilateral

aggression against my country by the United States, Britain and France. The policies of the British regime, as everyone is aware, are like a poison with no antidote.

The French regime has implicated itself in the crisis in my country since its inception. It has gone from supporting armed terrorist groups and providing them with media coverage to supplying them with weapons and ammunition. The former Foreign Minister of France Laurent Fabius was implicated in the transportation of chemical toxins to Syria that were used in 2013.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I am taking the floor to exercise my right of reply to respond to the comments made by the Iranian representative.

First, to imply that the United States was responsible for Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against Iran is just totally laughable. The Iranian representative made remarks about the destruction of the United States chemical-weapon stockpile. As I have said before in this room, that destruction plan is on schedule to be completed in 2023.

With regard to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Iran is an outlier. Over the past few years, BWC States parties have tried to make incremental progress, knowing that it was impossible to get consensus on a verification protocol. However, at every single opportunity, Iran did what it could to block progress. One has to ask why it did that. Why is Iran scared of further progress in the BWC context? Only Iran can answer that.

Finally, Iran is a regime that provides support to countries that have used chemical weapons. It supports international terrorism. I have laid out a number of incidents for which Iran has been responsible. It is a country that has hidden its nuclear-weapons programme in the past. It has taken United States diplomats hostage, as we all remember from 1979, when it seized the United States Embassy. It took those individuals hostage for hundreds of days. It detains foreigners without charge. Very simply, is that a regime that can be trusted and believed? It likes to paint itself as a moderate, peace-loving nation, but it is anything but.

With regard to the remarks by the Syrian representative, he is quite consistent in reiterating and rattling off the propaganda that is turned out by the propaganda machine in Damascus. Syria has used chemical weapons. There can be no denying that. It is a fact, no matter how much the Syrian representatives

deny it. Almost every country, particularly those represented in this room, knows that Syria is responsible for carrying out chemical-weapon attacks on its own people. Its defenders are extremely few, and it is important to take note of who those defenders are.

Ms. Yaron (Israel): In response to a few speakers that have mentioned Israel in their statements, I would like to state the accurate fact that Israel has been a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention since 1993 and is also a signatory to the Geneva Protocol of 1925. Israel has a robust national export-control mechanism, which embodies the norms, targets and obligations of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): In the course of our deliberations, a few Western countries have raised concerns about Iran's ballistic-missile programme. They have also argued that Iran's ballistic-missile launches are inconsistent with resolution 2231 (2015). I am therefore taking the floor to make some comments to clarify that issue.

Let me first explain the basis of Iran's defensive posture. Our defensive posture stems from sober geostrategic calculation and moral and religious convictions, while also being based on significant historical experience. During Saddam Hussein's aggression against Iran, he rained missiles on our cities, some of which carried chemical components that were provided by certain Western countries, particularly the United States. However, Iran was actively prevented from purchasing even the most rudimentary means of self-defence to at least deter the aggressor. The application of such restrictions against Iran by all Western countries still continues.

In addition to Saddam's aggression, which was effectively backed by the United States and its regional allies, Iran has been subject to American military interventions on a few occasions over the past 40 years. During those decades, we were also faced with persistent United States threats, especially through its outdated mantra that all options are on the table. We should also recall that for many years, certain countries in the region have been calling on the United States to attack Iran. Further, we also like to refer to Israel's decades of threats against Iran, the most recent of which was using nuclear weapons and threatening Iran with nuclear annihilation. That is definitely wishful thinking.

We have therefore learned our lesson by having to deal with persistent restrictions on obtaining essential

defensive weapons, on the one hand, and with defending our nation against continued foreign threats on the other. We learned that no Iranian Administration can leave its people defenceless in a region as volatile as the Persian Gulf. Our main responsibility is to protect our citizens.

We have therefore developed our own indigenous missile defence system, which is a legitimate and lawful programme and our inherent right under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. It is worth mentioning that our entire defence expenditure is a fraction of that of United States clients in our neighbourhood, who race to buy hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of the most sophisticated weaponry, including long-range missiles.

With regard to the role of missiles in its defence posture, Iran's missile programme is a conventional defensive capability. Its missiles are for defensive purposes only and are an effective means of deterrence against foreign threats. Iran's conscious decision to focus on precision rather than range has afforded us the capability to strike back with pinpoint accuracy. Nuclear weapons do not need to be precise, but conventional warheads do.

The only use that Iran has made of missiles since the beginning of the eight-year war imposed on us has been a limited and measured military action in legitimate self-defence against terrorists for the crimes that they committed in Iraq. Efforts to portray Iran's ballistic missiles as a regional threat are therefore a deceptive and hostile policy of the United States and its regional allies.

Finally, with regard to the arguments about the relationship between resolution 2231 (2015) and Iran's ballistic-missile launches, the resolution only "calls upon" Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles "designed" to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons. Missiles that are designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons are therefore the subject of the resolution's attention. Iran has repeatedly stated that none of its ballistic missiles have been designed to have such a capability, and Iran's related activities are therefore in no way inconsistent with resolution 2231 (2015). We respect resolution 2231 (2015) and we respect our international commitments.

It is also worth mentioning that, due to extreme pressure by the United States, the Security Council has considered Iran's ballistic-missile launches on various occasions. According to paragraph 9 of the

Secretary-General's third report (S/2017/515) on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), there was in fact "no consensus in the Security Council on how this particular launch related to resolution 2231 (2015)".

In an interpretation of the relevant paragraph of resolution 2231 (2015), the United States Special Envoy for Iran recently stated that the resolution "simply" and "kindly" calls on Iran not to undertake certain activity. That is the interpretation of the United States Special Envoy. The Committee is aware that United States representatives are deeply addicted to lying, but sometimes, in the interests of their own policy, they tell the truth. He then concludes by saying that the resolution's language is hardly a clear and enforceable prohibition. That is another truth that he has been obliged to admit.

Our last comment is that while comparing the relevant paragraphs of resolution 1929 (2010) and 2231 (2015) in a university setting, professors of law are also of the view that, under resolution 2231 (2015), Iran is no longer under the Security Council's legal prohibition regarding its ballistic-missile activity.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): I am not going to waste time replying to the baseless accusations that have been thrown around by the Russian and Syrian delegations. Our distinguished French colleague has set out the facts on what has been discovered about chemical-weapons use in Syria.

A few days ago, in speaking in right of reply in the general debate (see A/C.1/73/PV.5), I set out the facts concerning the use in Salisbury of chemical weapons, which were gathered in the course of the meticulous, impartial and objective work of the British police. The United Kingdom is certainly not going to take any lectures from Russia or anybody else about the impartiality of our criminal justice system.

Instead, I would like to make a more general point. What we are seeing is Syria and Russia being desperate to deflect attention away from their use of chemical weapons. They are deliberately misrepresenting and undermining the processes and institutions by which the use of chemical weapons is investigated. They are flailing around making desperate accusations against others for anything that they can think of to deflect attention. They are desperate because they have been caught.

Every delegation that has spoken in the cluster on other weapons of mass destruction over the past couple of days has said that they condemn the use of chemical weapons anywhere and by anyone. I think that is right. I think we all do. Nobody in this room and nobody in the wider world should be fooled by what the Russians and the Syrians are saying about this. Our norm — the world's norm — against the use of chemical weapons, which has persisted for a century, is being undermined by countries using chemical weapons or making excuses for others using chemical weapons. Syria has used chemical weapons against its own people. Russia has used chemical weapons in my country. They must and will be held accountable for that.

The Chair: The interpreters have to be released at 1 p.m. I therefore suggest that we continue in one of the two working languages of the United Nations, French or English. Members may choose either.

Mr. Hwang (France): As an exception, I will speak English, although that is against my instructions and our long-standing position on multilingualism at the United Nations.

In order not to waste time, I will not postpone my right of reply to the representative of Syria, who made ridiculous proposals regarding the so-called support of my country for terrorism. We fight terrorism, anywhere and any time, and we fight the financing of terrorism, as the First Committee is aware. We do not support terrorism. Rather, we are a victim of terrorism.

On a more serious note, I would also like to respond to and reject one important false argument put forward by my Syrian colleague regarding the compatibility between the Chemical Weapons Convention and the decision adopted in The Hague in June.

Syria does not want any kind of inspection of its territory. That is clear and was noted by my colleagues from the United States and the United Kingdom in comments to which I completely subscribe. As a result of Syria not wanting verification or inspections, it has tried to disseminate the idea that the Convention was not designed to attribute responsibility. That is not true, in fact it is absolutely false. There are many provisions in the Convention that are designed and aim to attribute responsibility. My Syrian colleague only has to read the Convention again and he will see that that is the case.

However, what we decided in The Hague this year was to give the Organization for the Prohibition

of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) the capacity to attribute responsibility. I would like to recall that it was not France that carried out a legal analysis of the compatibility between the Convention and the decision in The Hague but rather the Director-General of the OPCW, who has repeated on various occasions that the decision is absolutely compatible and compliant with the Convention.

Ms. Çalışkan (Turkey): The baseless and delusional allegations of the representative of the Syrian regime are nothing but futile efforts to distort the stark reality regarding the regime's atrocities, which amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has confirmed four times that the regime has used chemical weapons against its own people. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons states that there are still gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the regime's declaration on its chemical-weapon programme and stockpiles. While the regime's representative has stories to tell, those are the facts.

We have seen once again this year that whoever speaks out about that reality is described by the regime as a provider of chemical substances, a trainer of terrorists and so on in order to divert attention away from what is happening on the ground. There is no need to underline that Turkey implements all its obligation under the conventions to which it is party and the related Security Council resolutions.

The regime, which lost its legitimacy long ago, has a well-documented and ever-growing record of the use of chemical weapons, which runs counter to its obligations under the international agreements and conventions to which it is party. The regime itself is the ultimate root cause of the problems resulting from the Syrian conflict, and it will be held accountable.

The Chair: I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on a point of order.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic): I have asked for the floor to speak on a point of order.

I would like to deliver my right of reply in my native language and since there is currently no interpretation available, I will reserve my right to use my second right of reply once the translation is available.

The Chair: We will now hear the second interventions in right of reply, which are limited to five minutes.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I will be very brief. With regard to the comments made by the Iranian representative on ballistic missiles, I will simply say that it is one thing to protect one's citizens and it is another to export ballistic missiles to proxies, such as Hizbullah, Hamas, the Houthi rebels and terrorist groups in Syria.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation): I would like to speak French, but unfortunately my knowledge of that very musical and beautiful language is rather limited. I will therefore speak English.

We heard the statement of my colleague from Great Britain and can draw two conclusions from it. First, the British authorities still have no evidence of Russia's involvement in the so-called Skripal case, and secondly, my British colleague would like the international community to be fooled by the British authorities and those countries supporting Britain in investigating the case.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): In his first right of reply, the United States representative accused Iran of blocking progress in the context of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and asked why we were doing so. I think that the question should be reversed and addressed to the United States representative. In fact, Iran has made every effort to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention in a credible manner. Last year we contributed significantly and substantively to reaching an agreement on setting up an intersessional process to strengthen the Convention.

However, it was the United States in 2001 that blocked the conclusion of negotiations on a legally binding protocol for the implementation of the BWC. It is the United States that has continued to block a resumption of negotiations for concluding a legally binding protocol for the implementation of the Convention.

So the question is why the United States is afraid of negotiating such a legally binding instrument and why it is trying to prevent the international community from concluding those negotiations and establishing a legally binding instrument that would strengthen the Convention. That is a question that many Member States have. However, the United States has no response and

tries to avoid the question, disregarding all international law, because the United States is against international law. That is the problem we are dealing with.

With regard to the accusation that Iran supplies missiles to terrorists, we fully and completely reject such baseless allegations. Iran has never provided missiles to terrorists and will never do so. It is the United States that provides weapons to terrorists in Syria. I ask members to listen to the comments of the President of one of our neighbouring countries, who has repeatedly complained about the United States providing weapons to terrorists in Syria. He is not the President of Iran but of a country that is a member of NATO. The United States is so arrogant and disrespectful of international law that it does not even consider the interests of its allies.

Mr. Liddle (United Kingdom): I would first like to complement my Russian colleague on his excellent English.

We have set out the facts in the Salisbury case countless times. We have been thorough and transparent and we have heard many other delegations today remark on that. The police and the Crown Prosecution Service have set out exactly what we know about the case. The Government has supplemented that with a very widely shared analysis of the wider picture.

What we hear from the other side is a tissue of obfuscation, deception and fabrication. We cannot do anything other than set out the facts as we see them. Other delegations can make up their own minds. We have a criminal justice process that is open, transparent and impartial. All we hear from the other side is a deliberate attempt to muddy the waters. I need to say no more than that. Others can make their own judgments.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of Finland on a point of order.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland): I know from experience that time management in the First Committee is sometimes very challenging.

We were supposed to hear the group statements concerning conventional weapons during the last hour of this morning's session. I was just wondering when those groups' statements are going to be delivered. Will they be delivered during the first hour of this afternoon's session or at another time?

The Chair: I am informed by the Secretariat that they will be heard tomorrow afternoon. However, I will shortly announce our plan for this afternoon.

I give the floor to the representative of Peru on a point of order.

Mr. Prieto (Peru): With regard to a message spread on social networks about the alleged death of the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ambassador Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, I am pleased to inform the First Committee that Ambassador Pérez de Cuéllar is doing perfectly well. His family has officially announced that he is in good health. The information that was circulated by some media outlets was fake news, provided by a fake Twitter.

The Chair: I am happy to hear the good news.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iran.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am happy to hear the good news from our colleague from Peru. That is why we need to be patient in considering the comments and proposals that we receive and why I sometimes ask for those comments to be repeated in order to be able to digest them fully.

The Chair: The next meeting of the Committee will be held this afternoon at 3 p.m. in Conference Room 2. The Committee will continue its thematic discussion on outer space disarmament aspects. In answer to the question posed by the representative of Finland, we will also continue our discussions on conventional weapons, time permitting.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.