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Seventy-second session

First Committee

2nd meeting

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Official Records

Chair: Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Introductory statements

The Chair: I would like to welcome all delegations to this meeting, in particular those joining us for the first time from their capitals or other United Nations duty stations. I would like to extend a particularly warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, President of the General Assembly, who is here today to share his vision for the current session of the Assembly. We are very pleased to have him in our midst. I would also like to acknowledge the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu. Let me also extend warm congratulations to Ambassador Sabri Boukadoum of Algeria for the skilful and effective manner in which he conducted the proceedings of the First Committee at its seventy-first session. I should also like to pay tribute to other members of the previous Bureau for all their hard work in ensuring the success of the session.

In accordance with our programme of work and timetable, the Committee will begin its general debate today on all disarmament and international security agenda items allocated to it — agenda items 90 to 106. Before we proceed, allow me to make a brief statement in my capacity as Chair of the First Committee at this session.

(spoke in Arabic)

At the outset, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to the American people following the extremely distressing incident that claimed the lives

of dozens of people. We wish all those who were injured a speedy recovery. We deeply regret that this incident occurred.

In 1946, the General Assembly adopted resolution 1 (I), which raised issues related to atomic energy and the international cooperation required in order to meet the challenge to international peace and security. The Assembly also addressed the negative impact of nuclear weapons, and 122 countries voted in favour of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It was the very first Treaty to be signed following negotiations that had been ongoing for 20 years. We must now encourage the implementation of international conventions and treaties on nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Banning those weapons is the only way of ensuring that they are never used.

We share the security concerns sparked by the current situation on the Korean peninsula. We underscore the need to respect international norms relating to the prohibition of nuclear weapons. We must speed up the implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This year we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. It should encourage us to strengthen cooperation among the various stakeholders with a view to preserving outer space for the benefit of humankind. I draw the Committee's attention to the work undertaken by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. We look forward to a fruitful exchange of views on ways to meet challenges in that area.

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The perpetual failure of the Conference on Disarmament — the multilateral body that addresses disarmament issues — for the past 20 years as it continues to develop its programme of work should encourage us to redouble our efforts in that forum.

We welcome the agreement reached by the Disarmament Commission in April to develop confidence-building measures. We trust that such measures will give new impetus to the Commission's work. At the same time, I hope that we will work seriously and make recommendations that will address the concerns of Member States.

The dangers relating to nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction hamper humankind's progress and are a source of deep concern for all States Members of the United Nations. It is of key importance, in particular in an era of globalization. A genuine balance must be struck with regard to legal trade and this field. There are conventions governing issues related to weapons of mass destruction, as stipulated in Security Council resolution 2325 (2016). The goals of that resolution can be achieved by Member States if they step up their international cooperation efforts.

The illicit trade in conventional weapons is a genuine challenge that fuels conflict and crime in all corners of the world. The large-scale proliferation of small arms and light weapons and ammunition helps to promote violence. The growing use of such munitions and submunitions is a very serious threat. Improvised explosive devices are also a major source of concern.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges that only the peaceful use of nuclear energy can promote sustainable development. The control of small arms is a way to make societies more peaceful and therefore more likely to achieve sustainable development. States must take advantage of the notification mechanism for small arms. The third Review Conference of the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons is a step in the right direction. I strongly believe that Member States will be able to promote the implementation of that Programme nationally, regionally and internationally by 2018.

(spoke in English)

I now invite the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, to address the Committee.

Mr. Lajčák (President of the General Assembly): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your election to chair the First Committee at this session. I also congratulate the Bureau and wish it a successful session.

My wish for the Committee's success is not just a pleasantry. Its success is vital to the well-being and survival of millions of people around the world. Disarmament and international security is a fundamental objective of the Organization. It is no accident that that priority was assigned to the first of the Main Committees to be established. As members gather here to complete the Committee's work, let their efforts be focused on how to save, secure and improve lives. The Committee has a great potential to make a real difference on the ground. In our countries, towns and villages, people desire to go about their business in peace. People look for stability and security. The Committee should not underestimate its potential to facilitate that environment when addressing critical issues such as disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

The work of the Committee will contribute significantly to our global efforts to prevent conflicts from escalating into global crises. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is that we work towards prevention as a key priority. In addition, disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons — whether conventional, small arms or nuclear weapons — serves to bolster the life expectancy of peace. It is essential that we work to create peace and, importantly, to sustain peace.

Discussions on disarmament are indeed not easy. They often relate to very sensitive matters of national security for States. Nevertheless, we have made progress. This year we adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. That landmark Treaty, opened for signature only a few days ago, moves us towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We should recognize that important step. We must also acknowledge that, after nearly two decades of stalemate, the Disarmament Commission reached consensus on recommendations to be presented to the General Assembly. But we still face with many challenges ahead. The final and total elimination of nuclear weapons will require us to navigate many complexities.

The evolving global environment does not look promising. We have seen new nuclear tests, and the threat of the use of nuclear weapons hangs over

millions of innocent people. An unprecedented number of people are displaced because of armed conflicts. The modernization of nuclear-weapon arsenals is growing. We have witnessed the horror caused by the use of chemical weapons, and global military spending grew to a reported \$1.686 trillion in 2016. Let me repeat that: \$1.686 trillion. That is while millions live in extreme poverty, lack access to basic services and go hungry. While we increase spending on arms and defence, we fail to adequately secure our planet, health and well-being. I therefore call upon Member States to summon the political will to do more. We must show courage and exercise flexibility in order to advance the ultimate aim of ensuring a peaceful and secure environment for all.

As the Committee works on those issues during this session, let us not hold positions for positions' sake. Rather, let us seek to be constructive, to reach out across the aisles. Let us deliver concrete outcomes that will make a difference to the lives of the people we represent here. As the members of the Committee work in a transparent and timely manner to complete their agenda, I assure them of my support and that of my team. I count on them. Our peoples dream of the Committee's success.

The Chair: I thank the President of the General Assembly for his statement. I understand that the President of the General Assembly has to leave at this time due to another engagement. We thank him again for being here and look forward to cooperating with him during the current session.

I now have the pleasure of inviting the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, to make a statement.

Mrs. Nakamitsu (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): It is my great privilege to address the First Committee for the first time in my capacity as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. At the outset, I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Aluloom on his election and commend him on his willingness to jump straight into such an important role so soon after arriving in New York. I wish to assure you, Mr. Chair, of the full support of my Office.

For the record, I also wish to thank the President of the General Assembly for participating in the opening of this session. His presence and the substantive statement he just made so early in the work of the Committee underscores the high expectations for

Member States to take tangible and concrete action to advance disarmament, peace and security.

The United Nations has sought a solution to the challenge of disarmament since its inception, yet there have been only rare occasions over the past 72 years where the need for decisive progress was more urgent. That was highlighted by the fact that Secretary-General Guterres spoke first about the nuclear peril in his address at the general debate of the General Assembly just two weeks ago. He said,

“the use of nuclear weapons should be unthinkable. Even the threat of their use can never be condoned. But today global anxieties about nuclear weapons are at the highest level since the end of the Cold War.” (*A/72/PV.3, p. 1*)

The Secretary-General was referring to the increasing tensions on the Korean peninsula. The incendiary rhetoric and threats we have heard over the past several weeks have awakened — and justified — public anxiety about the threat to humankind posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons.

People throughout the region and beyond, including in my home country, again live in fear, for the second time in human memory, that they may become the victims of the use of nuclear weapons. Civil-defence drills have once again become a sad necessity of daily life. The Secretary-General has stood firmly with the international community in condemning the nuclear and ballistic-missile activities by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Any resumption of armed hostilities would bring about unimaginable humanitarian consequences. The only way to reach a comprehensive and sustainable settlement is through diplomacy and dialogue, and the solution can only be political.

The crisis in North-East Asia must serve as a wakeup call. We continue to be haunted by the spectre of nuclear annihilation, decades after the end of the Cold War. The failure to yet accomplish our long-standing aspirations for disarmament has left us today with unprecedented dangers. That failure also constitutes a great burden on the fulfilment of many interrelated objectives, from the achievement of sustainable development to the elimination of war as an instrument of foreign policy. As we assess the current international situation and what we should do to advance the disarmament agenda, it is important to recognize three essential realities.

First, our norms have proved durable despite being challenged. The international community has remained unified in the face of the violations of the taboos against the use of chemical weapons and nuclear testing. That should give us hope in our ability to continue to create and reinforce new norms in other areas where they are badly needed, especially in the area of conventional arms, the progressive codification of rules to protect civilians from armed conflict, and where those issues intersect with emerging military technologies.

Secondly, disarmament has played a historical role in preventing war and maintaining international security. That was the very reason for which the United Nations was created. The path to peace through disarmament does not lie waiting for the right security situation to materialize while countries increase their military budgets and stockpiles year after year. On the contrary, measures for disarmament can build trust, reduce tensions and create the space to establish more durable and sustainable security mechanisms. We should not shy away from bolder thinking in returning to arms control as a means for solving contemporary security crises.

Thirdly, the completion of the disarmament agenda will enable the United Nations to carry forward many of the Organization's other priority objectives. Efforts to control arms have been increasingly recognized as intersecting with achieving priorities in the areas of sustainable development, humanitarian principles, human rights, gender equality and peace and security. Our ability to respond effectively to the current and emerging security challenges of the century will require us to embrace each of those imperatives for disarmament.

I will now provide some observations on what I see as the main challenges and opportunities facing this session of the First Committee.

First, in the area of weapons of mass destruction, I have already touched upon one particular nuclear peril. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that more than 15,000 nuclear weapons remain in the world, with many on high levels of alert. The adoption and opening for signature of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was a historic accomplishment. As States that now choose to accept those additional norms consolidate this instrument, we must also make use of the current review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to seek collective means for

implementing long-outstanding commitments. There are many avenues to reach a world without nuclear weapons, but everyone must take responsibilities to redouble efforts and take concrete steps.

Our ability to achieve peace and security through disarmament and diplomacy depends upon our commitment to fully carry out shared agreements. That is why it is essential for all participants to remain committed to the long-term viability and success of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear issue. I hope that members of the Committee will add their voice in support of that historic agreement, as a demonstration of what can be achieved through direct engagement and a shared commitment to dialogue and cooperation in good faith.

On the matter of chemical weapons, we regrettably continue to find evidence of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, by both States and non-State actors. In order to uphold our shared norms of humanity, all those who have used such weapons must be held to account. Such heinous acts cannot be allowed to weaken the force of our common principles. In that connection, I applaud the Russian Federation for completing the verified destruction of its chemical-weapon stockpile. That milestone sends a very important signal at a time when the use of chemical weapons is once again back on the international agenda.

Secondly, Secretary-General Guterres has called for disarmament that saves lives. That means focusing on measures that mitigate the impact of armed conflict on civilians, enhance public safety and security and prevent the outbreak of war in the first instance. The devastating toll caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas has been well documented. That is why the effort to seek a political commitment is an important step that should be brought to fruition. Expert-level discussions could also build on existing efforts and explore how to translate general principles into concrete measures.

In many countries, attacks using improvised explosives now kill and injure civilians and combatants more than any other type of weapon. Effectively dealing with that growing threat requires a comprehensive approach at both the national level and across the United Nations system.

Eliminating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is essential for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The forthcoming

Review Conference of the Programme of Action should be an opportunity to take stock of our progress to that end, and in particular to assess whether new measures are needed to address the challenges posed by new technologies.

It is also encouraging to see new initiatives on dealing with the problems posed by the excessive accumulation of ammunition, as well as on increasing transparency, accountability and oversight on the transfer and use of armed unmanned aerial vehicles.

Finally, we need to keep ourselves ahead of the curve on the so-called frontier issues, which include emerging military capabilities with potentially dangerous and destabilizing implications. This session faces a critical junction in its long deliberations on how to deal with the increasing malicious use of cyberspace. I hope we are able to find a common approach to build upon the outcomes achieved by previous expert groups, in an inclusive setting.

Rapid advances in the civilian and military application of artificial intelligence should continue to give impetus for formal deliberations on lethal autonomous weapon systems, within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Diplomatic and political efforts to keep outer space as a realm of peace also continue to gain momentum. I look forward to addressing that issue in more depth at the joint panel discussion of the First and Fourth Committees, which will be held on Thursday next week.

Members will have noted that the Committee's agenda has never been more crowded. We may take that as a sign that our actions to date have not been quick enough or as decisive as they have needed to be. But we may also take it as a sign that at least this part of the disarmament machinery remains alive and robust. That latter possibility is evidenced by the large number of new initiatives Member States have proposed to introduce this year. I therefore wish to encourage members to continue exploring means for increasing the dynamism in the First Committee's working methods, including by ensuring the equal participation of women in all processes.

In conclusion, I wish to recall the words of the Secretary-General, who said to the General Assembly last month,

“Today proliferation is creating unimaginable danger, and disarmament is paralysed. There is an

urgent need to prevent proliferation, to promote disarmament and to preserve the gains made in those directions. Those goals are linked: progress on one will generate progress on the other.” (*ibid*, p. 2)

I hope those words serve as a helpful guide to the Committee's work.

The issues and challenges in front of us are indeed daunting, but I am also tremendously excited about the prospects for opportunities ahead. I appeal to all members to take advantage of the opportunities. I wish the Committee the best for a successful session.

The Chair: I thank the High Representative for her statement.

Delegations may recall the discussion on A/C.1/72/CRP.2 last Tuesday, 28 September, at the organizational meeting of the First Committee (see A/C.1/72/PV.1). As promised, I have consulted delegations on the matter, and it seems that there is still no consensus on the way forward. I would like to inform the Committee that I will continue consultations in the hope of reaching an agreement by consensus this week.

Before opening the floor for statements, I would like to remind delegations that I count on their cooperation to limit statements to eight minutes when speaking in a national capacity and 13 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations. In order to assist speakers in that regard, and with members' understanding, we will use a timing mechanism by which the red light on the speaker's microphone will begin to blink when the time limit has been reached. As necessary, I will remind speakers to conclude their statements in our collective interest.

As mentioned during our organizational meeting last Thursday, I encourage representatives with longer statements to deliver a summarized version and provide their full statements to be posted on the PaperSmart web portal. I also encourage speakers to speak at a reasonable speed so as to allow for adequate interpretation.

I would furthermore remind delegations that the rolling list of speakers for the general debate will close tomorrow, Tuesday, 3 October, at 6 p.m. Therefore, all delegations intending to take the floor during the general debate that have not yet inscribed their names on the list are encouraged to do so before that deadline.

Delegations are furthermore reminded that the Department of Public Information will issue press releases with daily coverage of our proceedings in English and in French, which will be posted on the United Nations website a few hours after each meeting.

Agenda items 52 (b) and 90 to 106

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Ms. Krisnamurthi (Indonesia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom and other members of the Bureau on their elections, and assure them of our full cooperation.

NAM reiterates its positions on the entire range of disarmament and international security issues as contained in the final document of the seventeenth NAM Summit, held in Venezuela in September 2016. In that context, I would like to highlight the Movement's views on some important issues.

The Movement reaffirms its principled positions on nuclear disarmament, which is its highest priority, and remains extremely concerned about the threat to humankind posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use. The situation in the realm of nuclear disarmament continues to be characterized by an alarming impasse. The nuclear-weapon States have not made progress in eliminating their nuclear weapons. The role of nuclear weapons in security policies of the nuclear-weapon States has not diminished. Nuclear-weapon States are modernizing their nuclear arsenals and planning research on new nuclear warheads, or have announced their intention to develop new delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons. The Movement is deeply concerned by that dismal state of affairs as a result of non-compliance by nuclear-weapon States with their legal obligations and unequivocal undertakings.

The international community has waited too long for the realization of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the launching of negotiations on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament. It has become obvious that the existing approach adopted by nuclear-weapon States — the so-called

step-by step approach — has failed to make concrete and systematic progress towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Despite the tangible and indisputable positive developments on nuclear non-proliferation in past decades, forward movement on nuclear disarmament continues to be held hostage to misguided notions, including strategic stability. It is time to take a new and comprehensive approach on nuclear disarmament. NAM reiterates that the United Nations High-level International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, to be convened in 2018, as decided through General Assembly resolutions, would provide an important opportunity to review progress made in nuclear disarmament and to further promote that noble objective.

The Movement takes note of the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, on 7 July at the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. It is hoped that, when it enters into force, the Treaty could contribute to furthering the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

As stated by the representative of Venezuela in his capacity as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement at the meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on 26 September,

“The Non-Aligned Movement, which has always remained at the forefront of disarmament, while taking note of the recent adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, calls for the urgent commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on further nuclear disarmament measures to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in particular on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, as called for by General Assembly resolution 71/71.”

NAM stresses the importance of enhancing public awareness about the threat posed to humankind by nuclear weapons and the necessity of their total elimination, including through the observance of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

NAM reiterates its deep concern about the greatest threat to peace and security posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and those military

doctrines of the nuclear-weapon States and NATO that set out rationales for the use or threat of use of such weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Such doctrines cannot be justified on any grounds.

NAM once again renews its strong call upon the nuclear-weapon States to fully and urgently comply with their legal obligations and unequivocal undertakings to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear weapons without further delay, in a transparent, irreversible and internationally verifiable manner. The Movement also calls on the nuclear-weapon States to immediately cease their plans to further modernize, upgrade, refurbish or extend the lives of their nuclear weapons and related facilities.

NAM reaffirms the urgent need for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding instrument to effectively assure all non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances as a matter of high priority, pending the achievement of the total elimination of nuclear weapons in an irreversible, transparent and verifiable manner, which remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. NAM expresses concern that, despite that long-standing request by non-nuclear-weapon States to receive such legally binding assurances, no tangible progress has been achieved.

NAM also reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again is the only absolute guarantee against the catastrophic humanitarian consequences arising from their use. Furthermore, NAM calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to reduce immediately the operational status of nuclear weapons, including through complete detargeting and de-alerting, in order to avoid the risks of unintentional or accidental use of such weapons.

The Movement reaffirms its principled positions on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. NAM believes that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and are essential for strengthening international peace and security. Non-proliferation derives its legitimacy from the larger objective of nuclear disarmament. Pursuing non-proliferation alone while ignoring nuclear-disarmament obligations is both counterproductive and unsustainable. NAM emphasizes that proliferation concerns are best addressed through multilaterally

negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements.

NAM States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regret the failure of the ninth NPT Review Conference to reach consensus on a final outcome document despite the efforts made by NAM delegations and calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to demonstrate political will to enable the 2020 NPT Review Conference to produce concrete recommendations towards achieving nuclear disarmament, the ultimate objective of the NPT.

Recalling the opposition expressed by the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada at the concluding meeting of the 2015 NPT Review Conference, NAM States parties to the NPT express their disappointment that, as a result of such opposition, consensus on new measures regarding the process to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction was not achieved. That could undermine efforts to strengthen the NPT regime as a whole. NAM re-emphasizes the special responsibility of the sponsoring States of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East in the implementation of that resolution. NAM is concerned that the persistent lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution, contrary to the decisions made at the relevant NPT Review Conferences, undermines the effectiveness and credibility of the NPT and disrupts the delicate balance among its three pillars, taking into account the fact that the indefinite extension of the Treaty, agreed at the 1995 Review Conference, is inextricably linked to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

NAM is of the firm belief that non-proliferation policies should not undermine the inalienable right of States to acquire, have access to, import or export nuclear material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes. NAM reaffirms the inalienable right of each State to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy, including the sovereign right to develop a full national nuclear fuel cycle, for peaceful purposes without discrimination. The Movement once again reaffirms the sovereign right of each State to define its national energy policies. NAM stresses that any decision on multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle shall be made by consensus and without prejudice to the inalienable right of each State to develop a full national nuclear fuel cycle.

NAM recalls the successful conclusion of nuclear negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and E3/EU+3, resulting in the finalization of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on 14 July 2015. NAM underlines that the agreement showed once again that dialogue and diplomacy are the most appropriate means to resolve such issues, as the Movement has always advocated.

NAM strongly rejects and calls for the immediate removal of any limitations and restrictions on exports to developing countries of nuclear material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes, consistent with the provisions of relevant multilateral treaties. In that regard, NAM stresses that the technical cooperation and assistance provided by the International Atomic Energy Agency in meeting the needs of its member States for material, equipment and technology for peaceful uses of nuclear energy shall not be subject to any conditions incompatible with its Statute.

NAM once again reaffirms the inviolability of peaceful nuclear activities and that any attack or threat of attack, including using information and communication technologies, against peaceful nuclear facilities — operational or under construction — poses a great danger to human beings and the environment, and constitutes a grave violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the resolutions of the International Atomic Energy Agency General Conference. NAM recognizes that the primary responsibility for nuclear safety rests with individual States. The Movement further recognizes that the responsibility for nuclear security within a State rests entirely with that State.

In observance of the time limit, I shall stop at this stage. The full text of the statement is available on PaperSmart.

Mr. Plasai (Thailand): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Viet Nam and my own country, Thailand.

ASEAN warmly congratulates you, Sir, and the members of the Bureau on your election, respectively, as Chair and Bureau of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We assure you, Mr. Chair, of our support in advancing the important

work of the Committee. We also wish to recognize the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for their tireless and consistent efforts in advancing the disarmament agenda at the United Nations, particularly in the past year.

ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. ASEAN's collective efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation ultimately and strongly support the goal of sustaining and maintaining a world that is peaceful and prosperous, for the benefit of our peoples.

ASEAN shares the desire and aspirations of a world free of nuclear weapons. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional nuclear-weapon detonations remains, thereby exposing humankind and the environment to their catastrophic effects. Therefore, we are convinced that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use, and we continue to welcome all efforts leading to that end.

That belief underpins ASEAN's commitment to preserving its region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone as enshrined in the Bangkok Treaty establishing the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). It also underpins our commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to which all members of ASEAN are parties. As we approach the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Bangkok Treaty this year, ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty and continues to stress the importance of Treaty's full and effective implementation.

ASEAN has agreed to extend the Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty for the period 2018-2022. Moreover, we reaffirm our commitment to the principles and objectives of the NPT, which has been, and will remain, the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We look forward to continuing the work of the NPT Preparatory Committee, which will meet again in Geneva and New York in 2018 and 2019, in preparation for the 2020 Review Conference.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted on 7 July by the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to

prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. Along with SEANWFZ and other nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, that Treaty constitutes a vital step towards global nuclear disarmament and complements existing non-proliferation and global nuclear weapons-related instruments. The Treaty would also make a significant contribution towards the shared goal of making our region and the world free of nuclear weapons. The signatures of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Viet Nam and Thailand, as well as Thailand's immediate ratification of the Treaty, are significant steps towards an early entry into force of this historic legal instrument.

ASEAN also stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. While welcoming the recent ratification of the Treaty by Myanmar and Swaziland, ASEAN urges annex 2 States, whose signature and ratification are required for the entry into force of the Treaty, to complete their signature and ratification as soon as possible.

We continue to express grave concern about the escalation of tensions on the Korean peninsula. That concern extends in particular to the most recent nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 3 September, as well as its previous nuclear and ballistic-missile tests. We reiterate ASEAN's support for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner, as well as for the resumption of dialogue towards establishing peace on the Korean peninsula.

At the same time, ASEAN reaffirms the inalienable right of every State to the peaceful use of nuclear technology for its economic and social development. We look forward to formalizing the partnership between the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy (ASEANTOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency to promote greater cooperation on issues related to nuclear safety, security and safeguards, including capacity-building. As such, we welcome the Philippines' hosting of the upcoming fourth ASEANTOM meeting in December to further discuss that matter.

We recognize the threat and danger of the existence and use of chemical, biological and radiological weapons and call for universal adherence to applicable international legal instruments prohibiting those weapons. We welcome in particular the progress made

in eliminating chemical-weapons stockpiles since the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, 20 years ago, in 1997.

ASEAN also emphasizes the importance of the full and effective implementation of the non-proliferation regime, including Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). In that regard, greater coherence and cooperation are needed among States on intelligence-sharing, capacity-building and assistance. Furthermore, industry, academia and civil society have an important contribution to make to realizing an effective non-proliferation regime.

ASEAN recognizes the legitimate right and authority of sovereign nations to use conventional weapons to maintain internal security and to defend territorial integrity. At the same time, the international community must recognize the growing illicit proliferation of conventional weapons, which hampers economic and social progress and threatens peace and security.

For ASEAN, the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons is therefore key. We look forward to taking stock of the progress made in implementing the Programme of Action during the French presidency of the third Review Conference in 2018. We also take note of the discussions at the third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty and at the seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions earlier in September.

ASEAN looks forward to the upcoming sixteenth Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. We have a contribution to make in the form of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre, headquartered in Phnom Penh, in addressing the humanitarian aspect of unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war.

At the regional level, ASEAN also continues to address issues related to conventional weapons through various frameworks, including the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, the annual meeting of ASEAN Police Chiefs, the ASEAN Forensic Science Institute and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

ASEAN continues to work closely to foster closer cooperation at the regional level to enhance the capacity of ASEAN to address challenges to cybersecurity. We

have taken concrete steps to enhance cybersecurity in the areas of cybersecurity incident response, a computer emergency response team, policy and coordination and capacity-building. The second ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity was convened in September. ASEAN member States expressed support for the development of basic, operational and voluntary norms of behaviour to guide the use of information and communications technology in ASEAN in a responsible manner, which would take reference from the norms set out in the 2015 report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunication in the Context of International Security (see A/70/174).

This year has been a progressive year for disarmament. The agreed outcome from the Open-ended Working Group for a Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament and the Working Groups of the Disarmament Commission demonstrate that it is possible to achieve progress in disarmament today. We recognize that States have legitimate rights to ensure their own security, but that should not be at the expense of the collective security of all States. In that regard, ASEAN recognizes the value of multilateralism in instituting a rules-based approach to norms and as a tool for building trust.

In that spirit, we look forward to working with all stakeholders during this year's session of the First Committee. ASEAN also calls on all Member States to continue to lend their support to the biennial draft resolution on the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, to be presented by ASEAN at this session of the Committee.

Mr. Bande (Nigeria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Permit me to congratulate you, Ambassador Aluloom, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at the seventy-second session. Given your wealth of experience in diplomacy, Sir, the African Group believes in your ability to steer the course of our work to a successful conclusion. The Group also congratulates the other members of the Bureau on their election. The African Group also commends your predecessor for his leadership and laudable efforts.

The African Group aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The seventy-first session of the General Assembly witnessed efforts to address a number of multilateral disarmament and international security issues, including issues related to cyberspace and outer space activities. International security has continued to deteriorate as the world faces immense challenges to peace and security, particularly the increased threat of terrorism. In that regard, the Group underscores the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy to address disarmament, non-proliferation and international security in accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and restates that there are no substitutes for multilateralism in addressing global disarmament issues.

On 20 September, the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons opened for signature. The Group wishes to underscore that the Treaty, as adopted, reinforces the need for our commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to complement the Treaty. As the international community awaits the realization of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the African Group seeks more profound and concrete measures in pursuit of the objective of nuclear disarmament.

On 26 September, the General Assembly convened a fourth high-level plenary meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The meeting again served as a reminder of, and underscored, the existential threat posed to humankind as long as nuclear-weapon States continue to possess and modernize those weapons of mass destruction. The Group therefore welcomes and underscores the importance of resolution 70/34 as an integral part of the multilateral disarmament effort.

Seven decades have passed since the world witnessed the first-ever use of atomic bombs, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The devastation and impact caused by the twin attacks, including the impact on the environment, continue to be borne not only by the people in those areas but by peoples around the globe. Therefore, the time has come for the world to speak with unanimity so as to ensure the advent of a world free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. It is also the moment to raise our voices against the slow pace and the lack of good faith and commitment on the part of nuclear-weapon States to dismantle those weapons.

Early this year, States parties gathered in Vienna for the first Preparatory Committee meeting for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. Coming on the heels of the failure of the ninth Review Conference in 2015, which failed to yield the desired consensus on a final outcome document, despite the concerted efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States, in particular from Africa, we look forward to positive engagement as States parties prepare for preparatory meetings, as another unique opportunity to review the steps taken since 2010, the last time the process produced a successful outcome. It also offered a platform to restate our commitment to the exceptional role of the NPT as pivotal to our collective resolve to banish nuclear weapons from the arsenals of States, prevent their proliferation and assess the impact of harnessing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and human progress, including through international cooperation in line with article IV of the Treaty.

The threat posed to humankind by the continued existence of nuclear weapons is real. In that regard, the African Group insists on the implementation of all agreed measures and undertakings by the nuclear-weapon States in the context of the Treaty. The setback of the most recent Review Conference remains fresh and etched in our minds. It is therefore hoped that that disappointment would serve as a clear reminder about the need to renew commitments to the overall objective of the Treaty.

The African Group reaffirms the central role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the consolidation of the NPT, as well as in their contributions to addressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation across all regions of the world. In that context, the African Group remains committed to the Treaty of Pelindaba. Among other things, the Treaty reaffirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and provides a shield for the African territory, including by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting the testing of those weapons on the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

In the same vein, the African Group restates its deep concern about the fact that commitments and obligations of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, including the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, regarding the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, have not been implemented as agreed. The Group remains unequivocal in its disappointment

regarding the inability to convene the agreed conference on the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East, which should have been held in 2012. The Group furthermore stresses that the 1995 resolution remains an integral and essential part of the package, and the basis upon which consensus was reached on the indefinite extension of the NPT in that year. The Group wishes to highlight the validity of those commitments and obligations until their full implementation.

The African Group underscores the importance of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Group stresses the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in that regard by continuing to ensure the commitments of States to the implementation of safeguards agreements and in the provision of technical assistance and cooperation through maximizing the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development.

The African Group emphasizes the humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons at this session, in particular its serious concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use or detonation of nuclear weapons, either by accident or as a deliberate action. The Group notes the strides taken by States and other participants in the past three Conferences and continues to call on all States, particularly nuclear-weapon States, to factor into their considerations the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of such weapons on human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among other things, and take the measures and steps necessary to ensure the dismantling and renunciation of such weapons. It is in that context that the Group strongly supports all efforts aimed at the total elimination and delegitimization of nuclear weapons, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The continued existence and possession of nuclear weapons do not guarantee security, but represent an affirmation of the risks of their potential use. Our world, including outer space, must be free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It is in that context that the Group stresses the need for the nuclear-weapon States to cease modernizing, upgrading, refurbishing or extending the lives of their nuclear weapons and related facilities.

The African Group also stresses the importance of achieving universal adherence

to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), bearing in mind the special responsibilities of the nuclear-weapon States in that regard. The Group believes that the CTBT offers hope for halting the further development and proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament. The Group welcomes the convening of the tenth Ministerial Conference on the CTBT, held in New York on 20 September, and supports the international community, which has remained committed to promoting the CTBT, and calls on nuclear-weapon States and those yet to accede to the NPT listed in annex 2 of the Treaty that have not yet signed or ratified the CTBT to do so without further delay.

The African Group joins other Member States to reaffirm the importance of the work entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament (CD). The Group expresses concern about the many years of impasse, which has prevented the CD from fulfilling its mandate as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, and calls on the CD to resume substantive work without further delay, taking into account the security interests of all States.

The Group underscores the great importance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and welcomes the conclusion of the efforts of the Working Group on agenda item "Recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons". The Group expresses regret that consensus was not reached on the agenda item on nuclear disarmament and stresses the importance of the United Nations disarmament machinery as an integral aspect of multilateral disarmament. It underscores the significance not only of preserving the Commission, but in the realization of its deliberative objectives. The Group looks forward to a successful deliberation on the elements of the agenda items as it begins its next cycle.

The African Group acknowledges the efforts by parties to the Arms Trade Treaty since its entry into force, as well as the third successful Conference of States Parties, held in Geneva in September. The Group urges States parties to the Treaty to implement the Treaty in a balanced and objective manner, and one that protects the interests of all States and not just the major international producing and exporting States.

The Group reaffirms the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms, their parts and components for their

self-defence and security needs, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The full implementation of the Treaty remains achievable with the cooperation of all. The Group acknowledges that unregulated conventional arms transfers to unauthorized recipients fuels the illicit trade, and urges major arms suppliers to ratify the Treaty and promote its implementation.

The African Group remains deeply concerned about the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of small arms and light weapons, their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, particularly on the continent of Africa. The Group remains committed to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. With the successful conclusion of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, in June last year, and looking forward to the third Review Conference, in 2018, the Group urges all States to continue to fulfil their obligations regarding reporting and technological transfer, and by ensuring the unhindered flow of international cooperation and assistance as mandated by the United Nations Programme of Action.

This year marks the thirty-first anniversary of the United Nations Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. The Group welcomes the new helmsman as he assumes the leadership of the Centre. The Group assures him of full cooperation and constructive engagement. Despite a lean purse and limited resources to meet its many challenges, the Centre has continued to offer technical assistance and capacity-building to States across the African region.

Let me conclude by stating that the African Group wishes to reiterate the critical importance of political will and transparency in addressing international disarmament and security issues. The Group believes that our deliberations in the coming days should be guided by the need to advance the work of the First Committee and enhance peace.

Ms. Beckles (Trinidad and Tobago): I have the honour to speak on all disarmament and international security agenda items on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM extends its congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee, as well as to the other members of the Bureau. We assure

you of CARICOM's full support as you embark upon your chairmanship.

I would be remiss if I were to neglect expressing our appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Sabri Boukadoum of Algeria, for his stewardship during his tenure as Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-first session.

CARICOM aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

If we listened to the tenor of the statements by our Heads of State and Government that echoed through the halls of the Organization just days ago, we would be forced to consider the ominous state of affairs that currently characterizes the world in which we live, including in the field of disarmament and international security. Indeed, it was the Secretary-General himself who stated that "we are a world in pieces" (see A/72/PV.3).

CARICOM is gravely concerned about the evolving situation on the Korean peninsula and the threat of nuclear war. We are confronted daily by news articles that include, "War is now a real possibility" and "Are we on the brink of nuclear war?", to name only two. For small island developing States of the Caribbean, that rhetoric is increasingly worrisome. In addition, the scale and reach of international terrorism, the increasing influence of non-State actors, new proliferation threats and the escalation of strife and conflict among States are unprecedented.

As stated by CARICOM many times here in the Committee, that is a concern for us, for we are small island developing States, which rely on the rule of law at the national and international levels in order to guarantee our right to a secure, sovereign and peaceful existence. CARICOM therefore strongly encourages all States to act consistently within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations on all matters related to disarmament and international security.

We also reiterate the importance our region attaches to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the contribution the Committee can make, not only to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 16.4 but also to the attainment of SDG 5.2, to eliminate violence against women and girls.

The soaring rates of gun-related violence and the prevalence of gun-related fatalities due to the

proliferation of illegal arms and ammunition, illicit drugs, money laundering, cybercrime and other dimensions of transboundary criminal activities continue to pose the most immediate and significant threats to the security of our region. However, we are doing our part. The CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security — CARICOM IMPACS — continues to tackle the multidimensional nature of crime insecurity. In keeping with the 2013 CARICOM crime and security strategy, CARICOM IMPACS has embarked upon a number of initiatives and partnerships to track the proceeds of crime. CARICOM IMPACS has also been working on assets recovery in the area of asset tracing, asset management and prosecuting assets forfeiture cases, with capacity-building at the level of the judiciary, prosecutors and detectives.

Although we have crafted regional solutions to tackle the myriad problems of crime insecurity, fuelled in large part by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, we are all cognizant of the need for cooperation at the multilateral level, which is why CARICOM States subscribe fully to the object and purpose of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We remain firm in our conviction that the ATT can contribute significantly to reducing the suffering of many of our citizens and countless people around the world, especially women and children, who live daily under the deadly and devastating impact of the unregulated trade in conventional arms. CARICOM reiterates that, for the ATT to be a success, it must be implemented in good faith by all parties, including the major manufacturers, exporters and importers of conventional weapons. We call on States to remember the Treaty's core purpose, which is to reduce human suffering.

CARICOM has found non-binding legal agreements to be of tremendous assistance in our attempts to address the illicit arms trade in our region. We therefore reiterate the importance we place on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects as an important instrument in mobilizing international cooperation to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

CARICOM looks ahead to the 2018 Review Conference to further strengthen the Programme of Action process. We look forward to informal meetings in the lead-up to the Review Conference and will be highlighting the following areas of concern: the illicit

trade in ammunition, measures to address pervasive small arms and light weapons violence, the links between small arms and light weapons reduction and Sustainable Development Goal 16.4, the role of women in curbing small arms and light weapons proliferation and violence, and synergies between the Programme of Action and the ATT.

At this juncture, CARICOM wishes to underscore its appreciation for the continued support it receives from the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC). That organization has supported and assisted the States members of CARICOM in capacity-building measures and technical assistance programmes. We look forward to continued collaboration with UNLIREC.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is another area of grave concern for CARICOM. We heard the Secretary-General declare at the opening of the general debate of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly that global anxieties about nuclear weapons were at their highest since the Cold War. He described nuclear peril as first among the threats facing the world today. CARICOM implores the international community to let those words guide our deliberations in the First Committee, for we carry on our shoulders the responsibility to address one of humankind's greatest challenges — achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

CARICOM is proud to be part of the first densely populated region in the world to declare itself a nuclear-weapon-free zone, pursuant to the Treaty of Tlateloco, which established the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. Our commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world is in keeping with the special declarations on the commitment to advance multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Furthermore, based on the firm conviction that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons would be a violation of the Charter of the United Nations, a crime against humanity, and also constitute a violation of international law, including humanitarian law, CARICOM member States joined the international community in the negotiation of a universal legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. The

day the majority of Member States adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition Nuclear Weapons — 7 July — is a day that will never be forgotten. CARICOM acknowledges and commends the work of the President of the Conference, Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gómez of Costa Rica, for her arduous efforts in guiding the work of the Conference. We are pleased that, since its recent opening for signature, on 20 September, there have already been 53 signatories and three States parties to the Treaty. CARICOM member State Guyana has already ratified the Treaty, and more CARICOM States are expected to do the same. We look forward to the Treaty's early entry into force and its universal adherence.

CARICOM's long-standing commitment to working in a multilateral environment to address the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction has been underscored by our ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons.

Without question, regional progress in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is inextricably linked to our economic viability. CARICOM benefited from the support of the International Atomic Energy Agency in strengthening our capacity through the sharing of best practices and transfer of technology; and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in providing specialized training in emergency response to the deliberate or accidental use of chemical agents.

We also commend the efforts of the CARICOM regional coordinator for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), including his continued efforts to sensitize CARICOM on responses to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear explosive emergencies. To that end, we welcome further discussion on the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, including the recent high-level side event on preventing terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction organized by the Government of Panama and the Organization of American States.

Finally, it is symbolic that the Committee begins its deliberations today — the International Day of Non-Violence. Let us therefore be resolute in our

commitment to create a peaceful and secure international environment for current and future generations.

Mr. Alyemany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the pleasure of warmly congratulating you, Sir, as well as your country, Iraq, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-second session. We are quite pleased that, for the second time in a row, a fraternal Arab country has occupied such a high-level post in the area of disarmament and international security. We are confident that, under your guidance, the Committee will be successful in its work. Rest assured of the full support of the Group of Arab States. I would also like to commend the other members of the Bureau and to let them know how much we appreciate their efforts and those of Algeria during the previous session of the General Assembly.

We, as a member of the Group of Arab States, agree with the statement made earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Arab Group reaffirms the principles governing disarmament and international security. It is clear that the establishment of peace, security and stability in the world can be assured only if nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, which pose a threat to international peace and security, are eliminated. We must rid humankind of those weapons once and for all so that the exorbitant sums of money spent on such weapons can be allocated to development.

The Arab Group reaffirms that the multilateral commitments made and goals set, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, are the only way to address disarmament and international security issues. The Arab Group calls upon all States Members of the United Nations to reaffirm their individual and collective commitments without delay, and places its trust in the central role played by the United Nations in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Group underscores the fact that the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission are the most suitable multilateral forums for discussions on disarmament issues, in accordance with the mandate given by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978. That session underscored that priority had to be given to nuclear disarmament at the international level.

The Group welcomes the success of the work of the Open-ended Working Group for a Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament. The Arab Group eagerly awaits the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament in 2018, amid calls for the meeting to produce tangible results. That should serve as a reminder that the issue must be addressed from another perspective.

The Arab Group reiterates its ongoing concern about continued failures in the area of nuclear disarmament and with regard to respect for the implementation of the second decision of the 1995 Nuclear Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the 13 concrete measures agreed at the 2000 Review Conference and the 2010 Action Plan. Nuclear States have been clearly avoiding the issue of developing a specific timetable to honour their international commitments to completely eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

The Arab Group rejects the fact that the nuclear-weapon States adopt military doctrines based on the principle of nuclear deterrence, including the authorization to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. In that regard, the Group reiterates that the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, is the only way to ensure the non-proliferation, non-use or threat of use of such weapons by States or non-State actors.

The international disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime has developed over time and now includes the first legally binding instrument on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, preventing countries from undertaking to acquire, test, stockpile or transfer such weapons. The Treaty is an important step forward, welcomed by the Arab Group, because, for the first time, the gaps in the regime can be bridged, including equating nuclear weapons with other weapons of mass destruction.

The Arab Group reaffirms the significant decision taken by the States that took part in the Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument banning nuclear weapons, including Palestine, which was granted the right to vote and to participate on an equal footing. The Arab Group stresses that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is not antithetical to the NPT; it complements it. It is a Treaty that promotes the achievement of certain goals, such as article VI of the

NPT, regarding nuclear disarmament, with a view to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Arab Group intends to continue to undertake nuclear-disarmament activities. Arab States will take part in all multilateral nuclear disarmament forums, as demonstrated by the fact that all Arab States are party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and by their adherence to International Atomic Energy Agency comprehensive safeguards agreements. Israel, however, still does not comply with those agreements despite the myriad international resolutions and obligations.

In that regard, the Arab Group reiterates the importance of the implementation of the special commitments so as to ensure the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is the fundamental pillar of the international multilateral nuclear-disarmament regime and the cornerstone of international security. We underscore the need to respect the balance among the three pillars of the Treaty and to correct the growing imbalance resulting from the fact that some States continue to insist on non-proliferation at the expense of nuclear disarmament.

The failure of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the lack of respect shown by the nuclear Powers for their disarmament commitments serve to highlight a major challenge. We must step up our collective efforts to speed up the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The Group reaffirms the predominant role of conventions on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in efforts to achieve international peace and security, by giving new impetus to the efforts of nuclear disarmament throughout the world, including the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons. In that regard, the Arab States stress the need to take effective and immediate measures to establish that zone.

The Arab Group will submit a draft resolution at this session entitled “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East”. We count on the continued support of the members of the Committee, and in particular of peace-loving States that are mindful of respecting the purposes and principles of the United Nations, without resorting to double standards.

The Arab Group reiterates its condemnation of the ongoing threats to international peace and security, in

particular in the Middle East with regard to the security environment, because Israel retains its nuclear arsenal and refuses to sign the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State. Israel is the only State in the Middle East that has not acceded to the Treaty and refuses to submit its facilities for verification under the International Atomic Energy Agency’s comprehensive safeguards, which is a flagrant breach of the relevant international resolutions.

More than 20 years have passed since the adoption, at the 1995 Review Conference, of a resolution on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The Arab Group reaffirms its disappointment and profound concern about the perpetual delay in implementing the resolution, which hinders nuclear-disarmament efforts. The Group underscores that the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is a pillar of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and just as important as the Treaty’s other three pillars. The 1995 decision to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction was an integral part of the Treaty’s permanent extension. No tangible progress has been made since then. Instead, we have seen continuous delays, reluctance and a disregard for the commitments made, which has caused the League of Arab States to conduct a comprehensive review of the relevant issues, namely, the development of a strategy on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

In that regard, and in the light of the fact that the Action Plan agreed during the 2010 Review Conference has not been implemented, the Arab Group worked to break the deadlock during the 2015 Review Conference. The promising text of the draft outcome document of the 2015 Review Conference, which resulted in all States acceding to the Treaty, was stymied by a disappointing decision taken by the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada that broke international consensus in favour of Israel, which, since the very beginning, has not acceded to the Treaty.

In conclusion, the Group of Arab States, while presenting its most important priorities regarding the subjects to be discussed during the seventy-second session of the First Committee, recognizes that the agenda before us represents a tough task. Nevertheless, that should not limit our ambition, but must motivate us to intensify our efforts towards adhering to the

principles of equality and non-selectivity, and to avoid using double standards.

Mr. Hattrem (Norway): I have the privilege to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

Ensuring a successful outcome of the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will be an overarching priority in the years to come. We must aim to make progress on all three pillars, including the reaffirmation of article VI obligations and the commitments undertaken in support of those obligations. We are grateful for the excellent manner in which the Netherlands prepared and steered our first meeting in the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference. A core message from that Preparatory Committee meeting was that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda. It is strongly desirable to unite behind the NPT and practical measures to advance the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, even though we may not agree on all issues, such as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Indeed, approaches to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons diverged among the Nordic countries as well.

We all share the overall objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons through reductions in nuclear arsenals based on the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency. The consolidation of existing disarmament agreements such as the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty is therefore of the greatest importance. We strongly encourage the United States and Russia to promptly initiate a dialogue on further deep reductions.

Last year, the Nordic countries were among the lead sponsors of resolution 71/67, on nuclear-disarmament verification, which was adopted by an overwhelming majority. An important step in the follow-up of that resolution will be the commencement of a group of governmental experts next year. We remain committed to further diminishing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies in order to promote international stability and security. We call for action to reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons and the risk of accidental use. Last year, the Nordic countries were at

the forefront of efforts to support a General Assembly resolution on that matter.

Scientific evidence and facts point to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, intentional or otherwise. We reiterate our firm commitment to an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and urge all countries to uphold the no-testing norm. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to negotiate and conclude a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) in order to cap any possible nuclear arms race in the future. While we need to set a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear-weapons purposes, a future FMCT could also identify ways to include a phased approach to the elimination of existing stocks.

The recent nuclear and ballistic-missile test carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea demonstrate that we cannot take our non-proliferation gains for granted. The Nordic countries have consistently and strongly condemned such tests. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must comply with its international obligations and allow for the return of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors and the introduction of IAEA safeguards. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take the steps necessary to facilitate a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

The Iran nuclear deal shows that it is possible to achieve important results through diplomacy, even when the point of departure is difficult. It is essential that all parties live up to their commitments and obligations. The parties must act in a way that builds mutual confidence, which is why Iran's abstention from ballistic-missile activity is key. That could foster progress towards a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Such progress would require the good-faith engagement of all countries in the region.

We are witnessing today the use of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The ban against the use of chemical weapons has been violated both by the Syrian Government and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. The perpetrators of such international crimes must be held accountable. We call for united action in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Security Council. We support the work carried out by the OPCW Fact-finding Mission, the Declaration Assessment Team

and the Joint Investigative Mechanism. We must also make every effort to ensure full compliance with all the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The outcome of the eighth Review Conference of the Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention was far below expectations. We missed an opportunity to agree on a robust intersessional programme of work that could enable us to improve preparedness for suspicious outbreaks, address relevant developments in life sciences and consider emerging challenges. We must make use of the upcoming meeting of States parties to take the necessary corrective measures. If we fail, we run the risk of marginalizing a crucial multilateral instrument.

The Nordic countries are firmly committed to the peaceful use of outer space. This year, Norway and Denmark joined the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The Nordic countries remain ready to consider ways of reaching agreement on standards for outer space security and the prevention of any future arms race in outer space.

New and rapidly evolving technology, including in the military sphere, will have an impact on human and collective security. One aspect that merits further consideration relates to human control over new weapons. We look forward to substantive discussions on challenges in that context, including lethal autonomous weapons systems, at the upcoming meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Armed violence using conventional weapons continues to constitute a fundamental threat to peace, security and development in a number of countries and in some regions. The Nordic countries are firm supporters of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). It provides fundamental norms for responsible trade in conventional arms, including the assessment of the potential for gender-based violence before authorizing an arms export. We are convinced that the ATT will contribute substantially to global security and stability. Terrorists rely on access to arms. The illicit arms trade is a key part of transnational organized crime and is important for financing international terrorism and the activities of non-State armed groups. We are pleased that the ATT is gaining ground.

Small arms and light weapons kill more than half a million people each year, and the flows of illicit weapons in that category are a serious threat to security

and development. We must therefore intensify efforts to combat all irresponsible and illegal trade in, or use of, such weapons and ammunition. The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons has made important contributions to national, regional and international security. Since its adoption, in 2001, a number of steps have been taken to further enhance its relevance. We must continue those efforts, not least in the lead-up to the third Review Conference, next year.

The Anti-Personnel Mine-Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions have established norms that go beyond their memberships. They have demonstrated the value they add to efforts to enhance human security. Engagement at the global level is crucial in order to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of cluster munitions, mines and explosive remnants of war. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Mine-Ban Treaty. Since then, 51 million landmines have been destroyed and countless civilian lives have been spared. A mine-free world by 2025 remains our ambition.

Sadly, we have seen an increase in the use of improvised landmines as tools of war over the past few years. The number of civilian casualties from landmines is once again increasing. The main challenge in the years to come will be the widespread use of homemade devices produced and placed by non-State actors. Addressing large-scale contamination from improvised mines, and the suffering they cause, will require coordinated efforts and dedicated resources from the international community. Clearing the liberated areas in Iraq and Syria of all explosive remnants of war is necessary to ensure the return of internally displaced people and a return to normalcy for the population. Mine clearance is no longer something we do long after a conflict is over. It is relevant to ongoing conflicts in ways not seen before.

We would like to see many more countries participating in ongoing discussions on how to enhance the protection of civilians in conflict, and thereby improve compliance with international humanitarian law. There is a clear obligation to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants in conflict. We have witnessed in Syria, Yemen and Ukraine how the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas has caused a degree of civilian loss of life that is clearly disproportionate and in violation of international humanitarian law. The

destruction of critical infrastructure, such as housing, schools and hospitals, also makes post-conflict rehabilitation, peacebuilding and reconstruction more difficult long after the actual fighting is over.

Finally, we need a substantive and inclusive discussion on how we can advance multilateral cooperation on disarmament and non-proliferation in order to respond to existing and emerging challenges. The preparatory process for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament will be a good setting for that conversation. We should engage in the discussion here in the Committee and at forthcoming events next year.

The full text of our statement is available on PaperSmart.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiola (Mexico): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), namely, Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa and my own country, Mexico.

We warmly welcome your election as Chair of this year's First Committee and assure you, Sir, of the full support and cooperation of NAC over the coming weeks.

As we have done for several years, the New Agenda Coalition will present a draft resolution to the First Committee, which will be introduced during the thematic debate on nuclear weapons.

As a cross-regional grouping, NAC works actively to achieve concrete progress on nuclear disarmament. Achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons remains NAC's primary goal. Throughout the past 19 years, NAC has advocated for the implementation of concrete, transparent, mutually reinforcing, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament measures and the fulfilment of obligations and commitments within the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Although some progress has been achieved over that period, it is far from sufficient, and we are deeply concerned that new challenges in international security continue to be cited as justifications for slow progress. For NAC, the global security environment is not an excuse for inaction; rather, it reinforces the need for urgency. What is lacking is not favourable conditions, but political will and determination.

Urgency is also called for as a result of our increased knowledge of the growing risks and catastrophic

humanitarian consequences, including their strong gender impact, of a nuclear-weapon detonation. Given the scale of devastation that nuclear weapons are designed to inflict and the fact that their consequences cannot be constrained with borders, the continued reliance upon them in security doctrines and concepts is indefensible and fosters proliferation.

Nuclear disarmament is not only a moral imperative but also an international legal obligation. In spite of the growing international consensus regarding the illegitimacy of nuclear weapons, an estimated 15,000 nuclear devices still exist, and nuclear weapons remain at the heart of the security doctrines of some. Far from strengthening international peace and security, that state of affairs serves to weaken it, aggravating international tensions and conflict and jeopardizing the collective well-being of all States and peoples, as well as the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Indeed, in a world where the basic human needs of billions are not being met, the growing spending on nuclear weapons is both unacceptable and unsustainable. The allocation of vast resources to retain and modernize nuclear weapons is at odds with international aspirations to development as expressed by world leaders at the turn of the century. Rather than squandering resources on nuclear weapons, Governments should direct much-needed resources towards socioeconomic development.

The Action Plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference provided an important opportunity to put the process towards a nuclear-weapon-free world back on track. The nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, and committed to accelerating progress in that regard. The 2010 Action Plan reaffirmed the decisions taken in 1995 and 2000, including the 13 practical steps to advance the implementation of article VI of the NPT. The New Agenda Coalition still looks forward to the implementation by the nuclear-weapon States of their nuclear-disarmament commitments, both qualitative and quantitative, in a manner that enables States parties to regularly monitor progress, including through a standard detailed reporting format. That will enhance confidence and trust not only among nuclear-weapon States, but also between nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States, thereby contributing to sustainable nuclear disarmament.

The implementation of article VI of the NPT is a legal obligation, binding on all States parties to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under effective international control. On that basis, NAC welcomes the adoption, on 7 July, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, negotiated by the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, pursuant to resolution 71/258, of 23 December 2016.

It is fundamental to bear in mind that the NPT was adopted and indefinitely extended on the basis of a grand bargain. Nuclear-weapon States legally committed themselves to pursuing and achieving nuclear disarmament, in return for which non-nuclear weapon States legally committed themselves not to develop nuclear weapons. The presumption of the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons runs counter to the objective and purpose of the NPT. NAC shares a firm commitment to that instrument, which is the cornerstone of the nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation regime. While a Treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons is an effective legal measure contributing to the implementation of article VI, additional measures are still needed in order to fully implement it.

We must uphold and preserve the NPT, and the best way to protect the NPT is to implement it. The current review cycle of the Treaty, which began in May, presents an opportunity for the States parties to undertake a comprehensive review and assessment of the current status of the Treaty, the implementation of previous obligations and commitments within its framework and the challenges facing its full implementation. It is now time that the international community translate words into concrete action, backed by clear and agreed benchmarks and timelines. Bearing in mind the special responsibility that lies with the nuclear-weapon States, NAC believes that those States should not only implement their existing commitments, but also strive to build further on them in order to accelerate the fulfilment of their obligations under the Treaty.

Over the years, significant progress has been made on nuclear non-proliferation objectives, limiting the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, concerns about vertical proliferation keep growing. Nuclear disarmament has yet to be realized. Given that almost five decades have passed since the entry into

force of the NPT, the status quo on nuclear disarmament continues to be unacceptable. NAC believes it is time for States to deliver on their commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons, in line with NPT obligations, so as to safeguard future generations from the danger arising from the use of nuclear weapons. That is the only way to maintain the integrity and sustainability of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. That aim must guide all future efforts.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Bylica (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee and to assure you of the European Union's full cooperation and support.

The world is confronted now more than ever with serious proliferation crises that require our utmost vigilance and determined action. The EU condemns in the strongest terms the nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which threaten international and regional peace and security and are a direct and unacceptable violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. They also represent a major challenge to the global non-proliferation regime, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The EU reaffirms that the NPT is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the Treaty and an important element in the future development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. The EU and its member States will spare no effort to ensure the success of the 2020 NPT Review Conference, the tenth cycle of which is considered important in many aspects.

Moreover, the recent developments on the Korean peninsula underline the vital importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its verification regime, and the urgency of its early entry

into force. The EU welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 2310 (2016), which reaffirms the CTBT's key role.

The EU welcomes the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2375 (2017) and urges all States to effectively implement rigorous sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The EU is working on additional autonomous measures aimed at achieving the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula through diplomatic means. We reiterate our full support to our partners in the region and their security.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), negotiated with regard to the Iranian nuclear programme, demonstrates that effective multilateralism and diplomacy in good faith can work and bring about results even on the most pressing proliferation crises. The EU reaffirms its longstanding support for the JCPOA — a robust agreement endorsed by Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), which must be rigorously implemented by all parties.

While welcoming the ongoing implementation, the EU reiterates the need for Iran to strictly abide by all its nuclear-related commitments and to cooperate fully and in a timely manner with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The early ratification by Iran of the additional protocol is essential. Furthermore, we call on Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons. We reiterate our support for The Hague Code of Conduct and emphasize the need to step up multilateral efforts against ballistic-missile proliferation, which is a destabilizing factor in various regions of the world.

We find it deeply shocking and deplorable that the international community is still confronted with the use of chemical weapons despite international law prohibiting them. The EU reiterates its condemnation, in the strongest terms, of all use of chemical weapons. Any use of such weapons, be it by States or non-State actors, is abhorrent. There can be no impunity, and those responsible must be held accountable. In that regard, the EU recalls the importance of the full observance of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the vital role the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) plays in its implementation.

We call upon the Syrian Arab Republic, a State party to the CWC, to fully cooperate with the OPCW

Declaration Assessment Team and clarify the many serious and substantive open questions with regard to its initial and subsequent chemical-weapon declarations. The EU notes with grave concern the confirmed use of sarin in a chemical-weapon attack in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April and the exposure of victims to sulfur mustard in Um-Housh on 16 September 2016.

The EU supports and encourages the work of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, in partnership with the OPCW Fact-finding Mission, in its efforts to promptly identify those responsible for such abominable attacks. The EU calls on all members of the Security Council to support an immediate extension of the Mechanism's mandate in order to send a strong signal against impunity.

The EU reaffirms its full support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons, all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region.

All States Members of the United Nations have the responsibility to halt the illicit trade in and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, which fuel armed conflicts, organized crime and terrorism. The EU calls upon all Member States to join the Arms Trade Treaty, which has the potential to end the unregulated, illicit and irresponsible flows of arms to conflict regions and to countries with high levels of armed violence, thereby reducing the harmful impact of such arms transfers.

The EU calls on all parties to preserve the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and ensure its full and verifiable compliance. That landmark arms-control agreement has eliminated an entire class of weapons, including approximately 3,000 nuclear and conventional ballistic missiles. The Treaty is vital for the security and stability of Europe and of other regions.

The EU recalls that under the 2011 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, the United States and the Russian Federation must meet the Treaty's central limits on strategic arms by 5 February 2018. The EU encourages the United States and the Russian Federation to seek further reductions to their arsenals, including strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons, to reduce the operational readiness of their nuclear-weapon systems and pursue further discussions on confidence-building, transparency, verification activities and reporting, taking into account the special

responsibility of the States that possess the largest nuclear arsenals.

At a time when multilateral cooperation needs to be strengthened due to multiple challenges, the European Union remains a strong, consistent and reliable partner of the United Nations. The EU promotes a rules-based global order with multilateralism as its key principle and the United Nations at its core, as set out in the EU Global Strategy. We will further elaborate on the European Union's positions during the thematic debates. EU member States will elaborate in their national statements on particular developments in disarmament and international security that they consider to be of special importance.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiola (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee, and to assure you of Mexico's support and best wishes for the success of your work.

We meet against the backdrop of one of the most dangerous security situations in recent times. Mexico deplores and condemns in the strongest terms the nuclear tests of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its missile launches. Such reckless acts, in addition to being acts of provocation, pose serious threats to regional peace and stability. In the light of the blatant disregard for the binding resolutions of the Security Council, the seriousness of the 3 September nuclear test and its total condemnation by the people of Mexico, as well as our respect for international commitments and obligations, forced my country to take bilateral diplomatic measures, in addition to those outlined by the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The situation also has serious implications for the effectiveness of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, justifications for the use of weapons and the existence of weapons of mass destruction, as a guarantee of the security of some to the detriment of global security.

Above and beyond the danger that such escalating tension poses, it also fuels criticism of the relevance of the work of the United Nations. As Luis Videgaray Caso, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, stated last week at the high-level debate (see A/72/PV.12), there is no doubt that questions raised about the effectiveness of multilateralism are one of the greatest challenges of our time. After all, it is this kind of environment that should revitalize the international community's

determination to improve everyone's living conditions, as the ultimate goal of the United Nations. Therefore, we welcome the growing conviction about the need to reform the Organization and ensure that it is expeditious in addressing the challenges that affect contemporary society and sustainable peace.

We welcome the fact that Secretary-General António Guterres and the States Members of the United Nations all believe that the focus of United Nations action must be conflict prevention, in accordance with the original spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, so as to save humankind from the scourge of war. In the same way that global problems cannot be solved with unilateral or local measures, we cannot expect robust, sustainable and peaceful global governance to be based on the threat or use of force, or on weapons, much less on weapons of mass destruction or indiscriminate weapons. Disarmament is crucial to ending conflicts, preventing tensions and building confidence and stability. In other words, disarmament is necessary for peace and must remain an existential duty of the United Nations that we can no longer delay.

The latent threat of nuclear weapons is at the core of our concerns, and nuclear disarmament is an outstanding issue on the General Assembly's agenda. It is quite fitting to demand the total elimination of such inhuman weapons, to ensure that they are no longer used by any actor, under any circumstances. On 20 September, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was opened for signature. Its negotiations demonstrated the willingness of the majority of the States Members of the United Nations to fulfil their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the fact that we do not believe that nuclear weapons are legitimate, given their humanitarian impact. The negotiation of that Treaty is also an example of the value of multilateralism and demonstrates the need to continue multilateral negotiations on disarmament and to strengthen existing Treaties.

We regret that, more than 20 years after the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was opened for signature, it has yet to enter into force. The recent nuclear tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have underscored the value of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization International Monitoring System, but there is an urgent need to continue efforts to universalize the Treaty and for those countries whose signature or

ratification is required for the Treaty's entry into force to do so without delay.

In addition to the nuclear threat, we cannot ignore the fact that other weapons of mass destruction are being used. Recent reports indicate the use of chemical weapons and the risks posed 20 years after the Chemical Weapons Convention was opened for signature. We must continue to support the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism to verify the incidents in Syria.

While we should welcome the agreement reached on conventional weapons in the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as well as the strength of the Anti-Personnel Mine-Ban Treaty, which marked its first 20 years, we must also acknowledge that the United Nations has much to do to prevent the suffering caused by conventional weapons used daily to commit violence. Indiscriminate weapons are still being used on civilians. Small arms and light weapons are used in nearly half of all violent deaths throughout the world, continue to claim lives and fuel regional conflicts and bolster organized crime. Effectively controlling all international conventional arms transfers is a humanitarian imperative and a requirement for sustainable development. It is for that reason that the United Nations must work on synergies among the various international instruments on international weapons and prevent the diversion of arms to illicit trafficking so as to fulfil Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that the disturbing environment in which we begin our work leaves us no room for complacency. Instead, it should encourage us to move towards a more secure and peaceful world.

Ms. Baumann (Germany): On behalf of Germany, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I assure you of Germany's full support for your work.

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the observer of the European Union.

Achieving a safer and more secure world remains a priority for Germany. Unfortunately, however, we have seen an increase in the number of crises and conflicts and an increase in tensions over the past few years, not

only in Europe but also in the Middle East, where the taboo against the non-use of chemical weapons has been continuously violated.

North Korea is developing its nuclear and ballistic-missile programme while defying international law and the authority of the Security Council. Its illegal activities pose a serious threat not only to the region, but to global security as a whole. We strongly urge North Korea to refrain from conducting further provocative Security Council-proscribed actions and to show readiness for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Germany supports all efforts by the international community for an even stronger sanctions regime on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and calls upon all States to fully comply with their duties resulting from all relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), concluded between the E3+3 and Iran in 2015, shows that an imminent nuclear proliferation crisis can be settled by diplomatic means and on the basis of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), provided there is political will. Today Iran is subject to the most robust verification and monitoring regime in the world. We are satisfied that International Atomic Energy Agency reports confirm that Iran is acting in compliance with the JCPOA.

We should refrain from any action that might potentially jeopardize the progress made so far. Rather, we need to invest our efforts in ensuring the full and strict implementation of the JCPOA. In addition, if we want to continue to settle other crises by diplomatic means, we need to do everything to honour our obligations arising from agreements that we have joined. In that sense, ensuring continued success is a very high priority for Germany. We call upon all States to comply with all stipulations laid out in the JCPOA.

In times of multiple conflicts and growing tensions, we have to redouble our efforts when it comes to disarmament, confidence-building and transparency. We have to strengthen the existing architecture, instead of violating and circumventing existing norms. That is especially true for the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), which is at the heart of European security. In that regard, Germany welcomes the strategic stability talks between the United States and Russia. It is important that the two States possessing the largest number of nuclear weapons come to the table to clarify open questions with regard to the INF and to lead

the way to further cuts in their nuclear arsenals. An extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty would also be our interests, as it would contribute to European security.

Germany remains committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, a goal shared by an overwhelming majority of States. Germany has consistently advocated a pragmatic step-by-step approach aiming for conditions that would allow for a continuous reduction of nuclear weapons, and we will continue to do so. For Germany, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, with its three equally important pillars, remains the indispensable cornerstone of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Germany, together with its partners in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, will undertake every effort to strengthen the ongoing review process and the value and effectiveness of the NPT. That implies that we need to reinforce our efforts when it comes to nuclear disarmament. We need solid verification mechanisms and tangible disarmament measures, rather than mere declarations of goodwill. Moreover, what we need is commitment and unity around existing principles — not yet another dividing line.

For those reasons, Germany promotes the early start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). The high-level expert preparatory group is helping to further clarify the options to be negotiated eventually. At this stage, we would like to thank Canada for successfully steering that process, which can count on our continued support as a sponsor of last year's FMCT resolution.

Germany also sees merit in supporting a process with regard to the negotiation of legally binding negative security assurances. We are convinced that such measures represent a valuable instrument to further non-proliferation and are a tangible step towards moving in the direction of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Germany condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons in Syria, as documented in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-finding Mission reports. We express our strong conviction that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable. We believe that the Security Council must fulfil a special responsibility based on the findings of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. Germany calls upon Syria to cooperate fully with the OPCW and the

Mechanism, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Small arms and light weapons cause tremendous human suffering. We need to strengthen the capacity-building of the competent national small arms and light weapons institutions — especially in fragile and conflict-affected areas — in order to help them increase their control over small arms and light weapons, ammunition stockpiles and transfers. Germany has initiated a whole range of projects to tackle those challenges on the ground. As part of the Group of Seven process, we work with the African Union to improve small arms and light weapons control in the greater Sahel region. In another recent engagement, German disarmament experts assisted the United Nations Mission in Colombia in destroying the weapons used by the guerrillas of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo.

I would also like to mention an emerging issue of great importance — lethal autonomous weapons systems. As the rate of technological progress increases, it is high time to finally tackle that issue. We see a strong need for discussing policy guidelines and best practices designed to ensure that future weapons systems are in full compliance with international law. We look forward to contributing actively to the Group of Governmental Experts in November.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee and to wish you every success in your work at this session. We would like also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We are firmly committed to making an active and positive contribution to the outcome of our deliberations.

Chile aligns itself with the statements made earlier today by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. I would now like to add some remarks on behalf of the delegation of Chile.

Chile firmly believes that coexistence in a world without nuclear weapons is possible and that maintaining international peace and security without resorting to nuclear deterrence is an ethical imperative and an achievable goal, in line with the international system for the protection of human rights. This is particularly urgent in the current international environment, which has been rocked by the recent threats of use of weapons

of mass destruction, in flagrant breach of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

In that context, we reiterate our condemnation of the recent nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 3 September and the firing of a ballistic missile on 14 September — the second this year — over Japanese territory, which without a doubt is another serious act of provocation that threatens international peace and security and is a blatant violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Chile's commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation is clear. That is why, on 20 September, the President of the Republic of Chile was the third leader to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons — the last category of weapons of mass destruction not explicitly prohibited by a legally binding instrument. The Treaty is a promising path to achieving the shared goal of a nuclear-weapon-free planet, and strengthens and complements the current legal architecture on the issue.

We reiterate that, for Chile, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We stress the importance of achieving its universalization and the balanced implementation of its three basic pillars — disarmament, non-proliferation and the right to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. We encourage the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their commitments and obligations under article VI of the NPT and to move towards the total elimination of such weapons, to the full and immediate implementation of the 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament agreed at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT and the Action Plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference.

Chile reaffirms its commitment to supporting multilateral efforts to promote disarmament, non-proliferation and the prohibition of the use and possession of all weapons of mass destruction. In addition to condemning the military use of biological and chemical weapons in all circumstances, we urge all States to become parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, with a view to achieving a world free of chemical weapons.

We recognize that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition is a scourge whose

destructive effects are immeasurable. They transcend the sphere of international security, have a direct impact on socioeconomic development and human rights and exacerbate sexual and gender-based violence against millions of people. It is therefore urgent that the members of the international community pool their efforts to address that challenge.

Chile has actively promoted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, in its ongoing quest for the best ways to protect people, their rights and dignity. For Chile, the Convention demonstrates the best possible synergy between international humanitarian law and disarmament. When we presided over the Convention in 2016, we encouraged the strengthening of that virtuous relationship from the perspective of human security. That effort is part of the political desire to achieve a world free of anti-personnel mines by 2025.

I would like to conclude by calling on the international community to join us in our commitment to marshal political will to create the climate of mutual confidence required to forge ahead on disarmament issues. Mr. Chair, you can count on us to make a positive contribution to this year's work of the First Committee.

The Chair: Before giving the floor to the speaker in the exercise of the right of reply, may I remind delegations that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for a second intervention.

(spoke in Arabic)

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: We have already had an opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee.

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs mentioned my country in her statement, and I was very sorry to hear what she had to say. We reject the fact that her statement makes a presupposition about the findings of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism because that puts pressure on it. Given the mandate of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, attempts to influence the outcome of the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism are unacceptable

and inconceivable. The Mechanism's work must be based on the principles of credibility, objectivity, transparency and integrity.

My delegation has sent hundreds of letters to the Security Council, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Joint Investigative Mechanism, requesting an investigation into terrorism. Terrorists such as the Islamic State and other terrorist groups have been stockpiling toxic chemical substances, which they use as weapons to attack the military and civilians in Syria. My country has always cooperated with the Joint Investigative Mechanism. My Government has agreed to and approved a visit, which is scheduled to take place very soon, to allow the Mechanism to complete its mandate.

The position taken by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs heightens our concern that there will be presuppositions about the outcome of the investigation, which violates the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. The Mechanism is supposed to respect the principles of integrity, transparency, objectivity and professionalism. The fact that the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs is making a presupposition about the findings of the investigation is an attempt to incriminate my country, which is welcomed by terrorist groups and the Governments sponsoring them. It allows them to use that as a weapon against my people.

The statement made by the representative of Norway supports the NATO position, which calls for

the destruction of Syrian infrastructure, for assistance to be given to terrorist groups, both directly and indirectly, and for the targeting of Syrian army bases and those of its partners involved in the fight against terrorism. Moreover, NATO targets thousands of civilians in Syria, as well as schools in Raqqa.

The European Union often levels accusations at everyone who does not agree with its position. Some of its member States have helped the Islamic State and Al-Nusra by supplying them with toxic substances. It is curious that the European Union is calling upon the States Members of the United Nations to adhere to the Arms Trade Treaty, when the member States of the European Union are supplying weapons to terrorist groups in Syria. The airports of some European countries are now major hubs through which terrorist groups are supplied with weapons and ammunition.

We find it quite strange that the representative of Germany made various appeals. Her country provides Israel, which is not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, with submarines capable of launching nuclear missiles.

The Chair: I again remind delegations that the rolling list of speakers for the general debate will close tomorrow, Tuesday, 3 October, at 6 p.m. Therefore, all delegations intending to take the floor during the general debate that have not yet inscribed their names on the list are encouraged to do so before that deadline.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.